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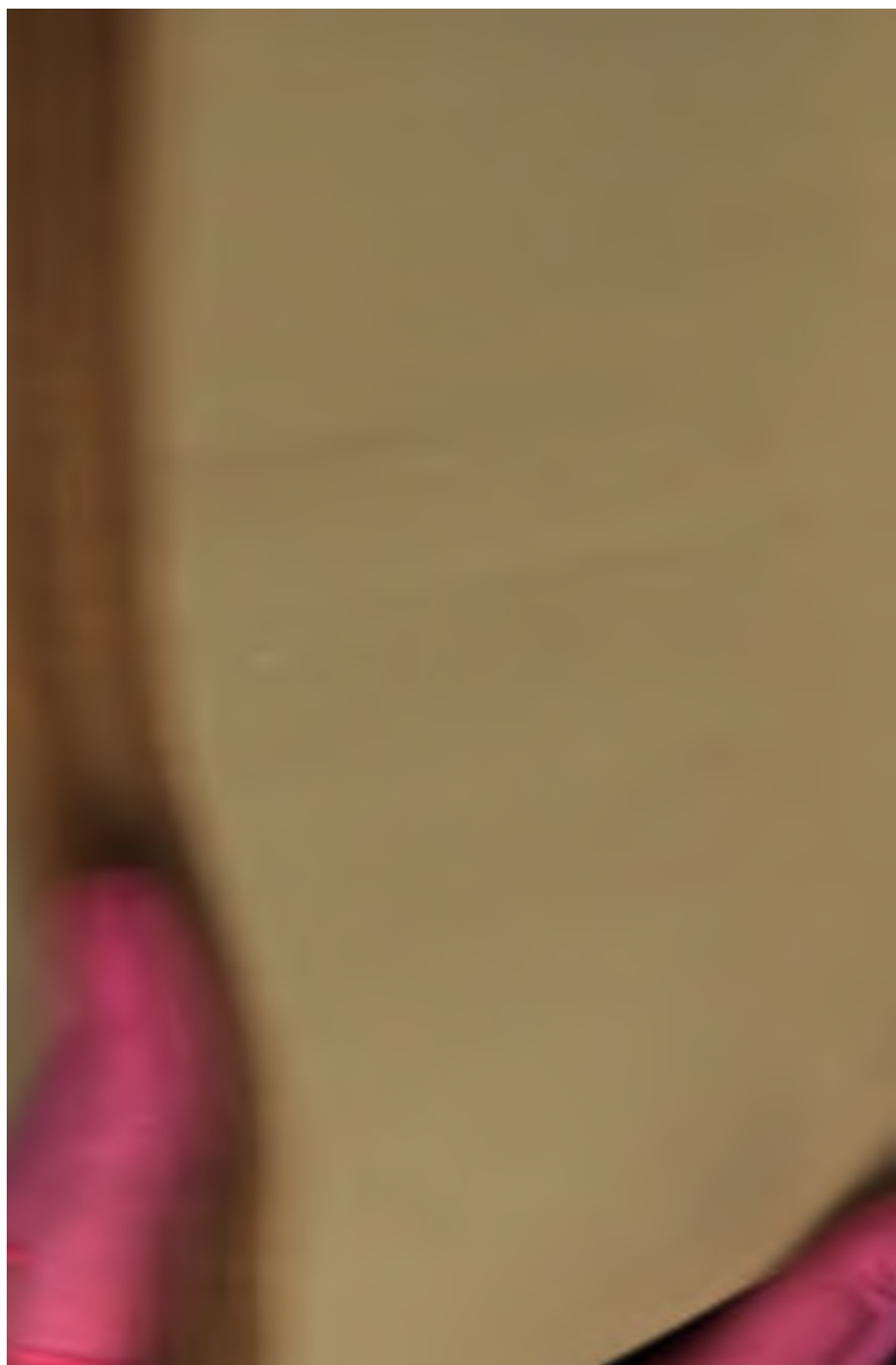
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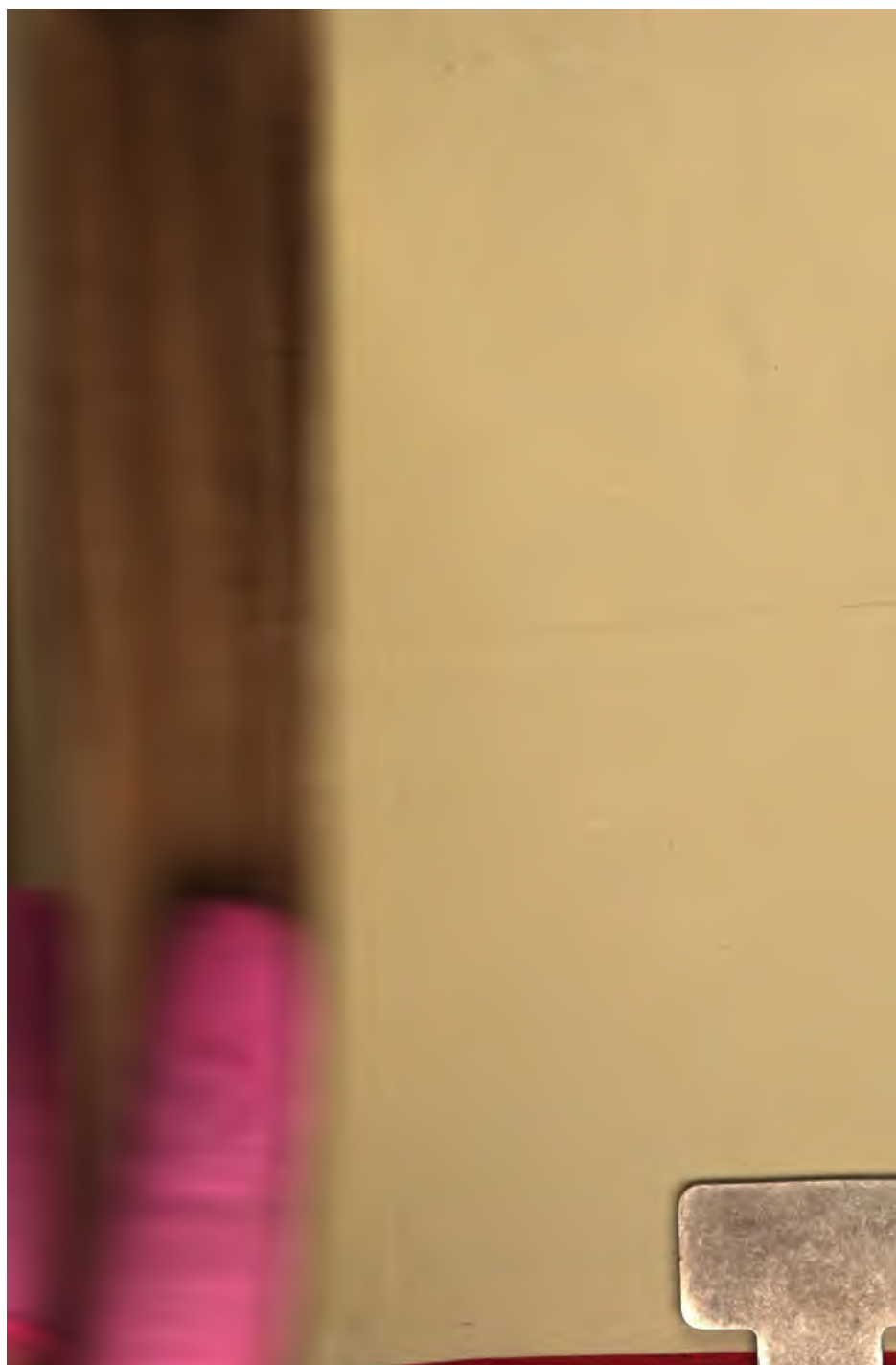
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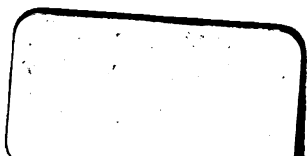








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# PROVED IN THE FIRE.

A STORY

OF

THE BURNING OF HAMBURG.

BY

WILLIAM DUTHIE,

•AUTHOR OF "COUNTING THE COST," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.



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# PROVED IN THE FIRE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### AMALIE'S LOVE:

IN the quiet and seclusion of the cottage at Wandsbeck, Amalie endeavoured to recover the tranquillity of mind so rudely disturbed by the late events. The house, with its little wilderness of garden, was no longer in the occupation of Herr Urlacher. Its tenant was a certain Widow Frœbel, an early friend of his

dead wife's, and its hospitable door stood always open to Amalie or to himself.

It was at all times a welcome retreat, for the Widow Frœbel was one of those happy souls who have the tact of making all about them comfortable; and her pleasant, homely ways developed to the utmost the advantages of the naturally pretty and snug residence she had made her home.

The outbreak of the fire in the great town had already driven the little rural hamlet of Wandsbeck into a flutter; for although a fire in Hamburg was a matter of no rare occurrence, it was usually confined to narrow limits. In this case, however, the necessity of help had grown so urgent, that messengers had been sent to all the neighbouring villages, such as Wandsbeck, Bergedorf, and Blankenese,

as well as to Altona, the adjoining Danish frontier town, for both fire-engines and men; and the Wandsbecker engine was off to the fire in a flush of enthusiasm.

Although the sudden arrival of Amalie and her maid Trinen, in their agitated and care-worn state, and the story they had to tell of the ravages of the fire, were not calculated to lessen the alarm of the already aroused villagers, it was an additional reason to the Widow Frœbel for the exertion of all her resources to sooth and comfort her unexpected visitors. And this the good soul did with the greatest tact, and considerable success. In Amalie's conception, the worst had already befallen, and she felt a sense of relief in the knowledge, that her father—for it was only in that character she had ever known Urlacher—had been rescued from impend-

ing death, and that at least the most valuable of his property had been saved. This comparative good, in the midst of so much evil, was in itself a source of consolation.

Her mind, thus relieved from the weight which had rested the heaviest upon it, turned with all the greater force to that subject which, by its nature, was most likely to attract it; and the images of Ritzenheim and Christian contended for mastery in her thoughts. She strove to guide and control these reflections in conformity with her sense of duty; but the task was more stubborn than her will, and its conflicting elements constantly eluded her grasp. Never before had such emotions agitated her breast as those which struggled there now; never before had she felt so powerless to overcome them. It was not that she faltered in the path before

her ; that path was already traced out, she had entered upon it, and to turn back was impossible. But it was no longer the path upon which she had looked with complacency, if not pleasure ; and the calm submission of her previous life, which had promised to lead her only in the ways of peace and quietness, had changed to a rebellious yearning for higher and unknown delights.

Was she to blame for this, or was it the fault of her position ? Her honest convictions shrank from the conclusion to which her thoughts endeavoured to lead her. She could not even whisper to herself that she loved Christian ; any more than she dared entertain the thought that Ritzenheim, her accepted lover, her betrothed husband, was becoming every moment more indifferent to her. She

feared to question herself as to whether she had ever loved him, or whether the divine passion had not now for the first time taken possession of her heart.

Then her thoughts reverted to her youthful days, when, in her childish affections, Christian, as her foster-brother and constant companion, held the first place. That dim past she felt was a girlish dream, which but for recent events would have only lived in her memory as a recollection pleasant to cherish and to smile over. Now the same Christian, her early, her first love—if that girlish fancy could be called by so serious a name—had returned in the dignity, the strength, the beauty of his manhood, to assert a claim on which she had never seriously reflected, or regarded otherwise than as a youthful passion long forgotten.

The whole story of her life, with the exception of some recollections so dim that they scarcely took the semblance of facts, extended no further back than her adoption by Urlacher upon the death of her father. To her, during long years, Urlacher had been all in all; father, mother, companion; filling with his almost undivided presence the tender and patient offices of each. More than all; subdued as his spirit was before her, who had taken the place in his heart left vacant by the death of his wife, and the absence of children, he stood as the symbol of authority in her eyes; of authority gentle but firm; the centre of wise counsel, and of patient trust. Thus she loved the father of her adoption with unswerving devotion and reliance, and had learned to regard his unstudied utterances as wishes

expressed, his outspoken wishes as commands.

Next to Urlacher, Christian, as her childish playmate, had held a place in her heart; and she looked back to their merry days passed together as the happiest of her life. But when Christian had left the village to become an apprentice; when they met at rare intervals, and then only to exchange perhaps a friendly word, the tie between them, if not weakened, gained but little strength on her part. While Christian's whole soul was becoming imbued with a reckless passion for Amalie, her own feelings passed little beyond her early childish affection. The incident of the quarrel between Urlacher and Christian had made a deep impression in her mind, especially growing out as it had of a confession of Christian's love; but, un-

fortunately for Christian, her sense of right was shocked by his infliction of a terrible blow upon him whom she revered; for which outrage she never learned the great provocation.

Thus, between her conflicting emotions and her ignorance of the cause of the dispute, her heart swayed towards him to whom she owed both duty and love. It might be that the reticence of Christian—the very fidelity with which he had adhered to his resolution, to obey the injunction of Herr Urlacher to refrain from intruding upon Amalie—but of which she knew nothing, told against him. His silence might well bear a guilty interpretation by one who was ignorant of his motives; and from Herr Urlacher himself, not a word, not a hint was given, to clear up the mystery.

Then came the Cross of Roses ; and by this incident her heart was touched indeed. The withered stems which she could well recognize, entwined with the living rose-buds, came with a pleading tenderness to her heart to call back her old affection for her once playmate. Nor was that all ; it touched a chord in her soul which had never yet been truly sounded, and which it only needed the passionate hand of the giver to wake into the full melody of love. But the hand was far away, and the chord fell silent ; only to be struck again when its notes jarred with the more peaceful strains which floated around her. It had, however, this effect : it effaced the image of alarm which the incidents of the quarrel had raised, and left her earliest reminiscences to remind her of one whom, if she had not loved, had once held, and

still held, a place in her heart. As months and years passed on, this more vivid impression grew gradually fainter, or was only revived in something of its former strength, but a rare and chance occurrence.

In the ripeness of time, Herr Hugo Ritzenheim entered on the scene. An affable gentleman, of a handsome presence; a traveller; a master of languages; acknowledged to be clever, and reputed to be rich. More than all this, he soon became Herr Urlacher's valuable assistant and cherished friend. What wonder then if such a man should be regarded as an eligible suitor, by him whose word was to her almost a command; or that his respectful, obsequious attentions to herself, should be received with a graceful blush of acquiescence? She had never probed her heart

to seek what might lie in its innermost recesses, and did not know the secret which slumbered there; the voice which could have called it into life was far away and silent. Shut out in a great measure, owing to her peculiar position, from active intercourse with the young of her own age and sex; deprived as she had been from her childhood of the advice and consolations of a mother; Amalie was more susceptible, in her comparative seclusion, to the advances of such a lover, under such an introduction. If her heart did not throb with emotion at his approach, or her eyes droop in his presence, she could at least receive him with sincere respect; acknowledge his talents and his courtesy. Often, indeed, she found herself questioning her own heart, why she should not love him—Sure sign that

she did not; and if she found no eager response in his favour, she was answered by no sounds of utter disapproval.

More than all besides, the influence of Herr Urlacher swayed her in favour of Ritzenheim's advances. It was not that her father, so to call him, exerted this influence directly, or with any deliberate purpose. He was too innately honest and considerate, to attempt to urge her to a course in the consequences of which she herself, and all her future life, would be involved. But he conscientiously believed that her union with Ritzenheim would bring prosperity and happiness to both, and in a hundred signs, small in themselves, in speech and act, he showed his concurrence in the suit preferred by his friend.

It had become the habit of Amalie to

seek for guidance in the quiet, unpronounced and unpremeditated acts and words of Urlacher, and in this case there was to her no mystery. Of his approval and even gratification at her choice she felt assured; and if her own heart did not bid her to go on, it sounded at least no warning note of retreat. Thus it was that Amalie became the betrothed of Ritzenheim. Was this love, or was it misconception? Was it not rather a mistaken sense of duty? In any case this was Amalie Lindenkrone's love for Hugo Ritzenheim.

## CHAPTER II.

### FIRE AND MORE FIRE.

THE little band of zealous men who, with their engine, dashed through the high street of Wandsbeck, with the deliberate intention of putting out the fire in Hamburg, soon found that they had their hands full. So also the worthy citizens of Altona with their engines; the men of Bergedorf, and Blankenese; and half a dozen other neighbouring villages with their several engines, their buckets, their hose, and their flambeaux. All found, zealous, bold, and resolute as they were, when

they came into the great town on the waters of the Elbe, that they had their work to do.

Put out the fire! They might as well have stood in the dry gully formed by a mountain torrent, and when the torrent came, swollen with fresh rains and the meltings of Alpine snows, have tried to stop the current with their hands! It was no longer a house or even a street that blazed; it was a deluge of fire flowing like a sea: licking and lapping with its waves of flame, house of wood, and house of stone, with every writhing, living thing that parched and shrivelled in its path.

It was not yet half an hour past noon, and the Deich Strasse on both sides was already burning itself out. The Rödings Markt was in full blaze. Leaping across the Stein and the Grützweite the fiery

torrent was rapidly flooding the whole of the Hopfen Markt, which, with some few insignificant buildings, formed one side of the open space where stood the church of St. Nicolas. The church itself was in danger. From early morn up to nearly mid-day, the terrified inhabitants of the neighbouring streets had made it their haven of hope and safety. The most valuable goods saved from the houses already burning or endangered by the fire—choice furniture, rich stuffs, costly jewels and plate—had been carried within its walls; and now this cherished place of refuge, with all its contents, was itself threatened by the insatiable flames. The cloud of glowing flakes, and the furnace-heat from the burning mass around, was rapidly preparing this next prey to the fire which lay in the direction of the wind.

It blew a strong gale towards the church, the spire of which, four hundred feet high, stood exposed to all the gleaming blast. It was not that the flames could touch it, for standing in a comparatively open space, it was beyond their reach, let them flare, and dart, and stream as they would. But the hot wind was parching it up. The wood-work within was becoming charred through its coating of stone. The eight gilded spheres upon which the spire rested, metallic as they were, were drawing the heat towards themselves and rapidly growing into balls of fire.

So early as one o'clock, the smoke from the wood frame-work curled and steamed through every aperture by which it could find vent, and by three o'clock the whole tower, from base to vane was in a

blaze. Strange and beautiful it was to hear the clang of its bells, ringing out their own death-knell from amidst the funeral pyre, which leapt in flames of red, and green, and vivid white around it! The bells of St. Nicolas were renowned for the beauty and purity of their tone. Daily, for nearly two hundred years, had they rung out their melodies at certain fixed times, played by the action of pedal keys after the manner of a harpsichord, and so marked the fleeting of the hours in music. But they had rung their last peal; now in a wild, plaintive jangle of sounds, as they were driven into motion by the very fire which consumed them, they wailed their parting notes, soon to become silent for ever.

Amid all the frightful confusion of terror, grief, and despair, which agitated

the listening crowd, not an ear but heard the last clang of the old bells with a feeling of anguish, and many an eye was wet with bitter, smarting tears. There stood awhile a tower of flame, springing higher and higher, which not even the fierce wind could bend; streaming into Heaven a beacon of warning, and an appeal for succour to all the land. Then it swayed, and shook, and crumbled; with a hoarse roar, heard even above the shriek and hiss of the flaming wind, cast itself down, and spread its own destruction around it.

The scattered fragments of the spire fell, partly into itself, partly on to the church roof, and the burning houses of the Hopfen Markt; and if there had been any hope of saving the body of the church when the steeple first took fire, there could be none now. Lower and lower

the flames burnt downwards, casting blazing beams and calcined stones into the mass of costly furniture which lay heaped beneath, and so preparing it for ignition; till the whole became one flaming furnace of which the outer walls of the church formed the shell. Not even the stone walls could long resist the frightful heat within; they crumbled away foot by foot until of the whole edifice only a heap of ashes remained.

Meanwhile, the flames were sweeping round from either side, so as to enclose the churchyard in a circle of fire. By seven o'clock in the evening the two ends met, and the whole space, from nearly the lower end of the Deich Strasse to the Senate House was one vast, seething lake of leaping jets of flame, and of red-glowing, almost molten ruins.

This terrible destruction had not been effected, without calling forth almost super-human efforts on the part of the firemen of Hamburg and its environs. Sixty engines were now gathered round the seat of the conflagration, principally on the side of the Hopfen Markt and the Rathhaus, pouring in such streams of water as the shallow Flethe afforded, or the imperfect means at command enabled them to obtain. As one set of men was exhausted, another took its place; and even women were to be found among the volunteers, eager to help the exhausted workers. All utterly without effect. No human exertion availed to check, even for a moment, the torrent of flame which poured on its resistless way, devouring everything before it. The puny efforts of many hundreds of men resulted in no-

thing but their own exhaustion, or worse ; in many of them being crushed beneath falling ruins, or sucked into the vortex of the fire like helpless, shrivelling leaves. If at the outset their efforts had failed to interpose any effectual check to the progress of the fire, how could they now avail when its terrific power was increased a hundred fold ! The heat became so intense, that it was impossible to approach even to the outer edge of the sea of flame ; the feeble jets of water which were thrown upon the scorching walls, and half burnt embers, were dissipated in thin mist and steam, ere they had reached their object.

A feeling of utter prostration, of despair, began to take possession of those who had hitherto laboured with the most courage and energy. They felt themselves

helpless and incapable in the face of the overpowering calamity which swept them before it, or crushed them on its way. The total destruction of the church of St. Nicolas, with all its precious contents, had the effect of spreading dismay among the most hopeful, and of confirming the worst fears of those who were already trembling with apprehension. To stem the flames seemed impossible, and there remained nothing but to fly before them. The number of those who were houseless and roofless was already great, and the streets leading to the gates of the city were half choked with the fugitives, laden with such household goods as they could themselves carry, or following the course of carts and other vehicles, containing often all the worldly possessions left to them. Panic-stricken and overburdened, their

only hope seemed to be in flying from the doomed city into the broad roads, the lanes, and open fields of the suburbs. Men, women, and children were there; pale, haggard, and tottering beneath their loads. Many left without house or home by the implacable destroyer; more who had fled from beneath the roofs which sheltered them, preferring to pass the night under the open sky to remaining in their frail tenements exposed to the ruthless, insatiable fire.

And so the night drew on—no night to the hapless citizens of Hamburg—with the flames widening out fanwise from the narrow stem from which they had arisen. The broad Deich was threatened on its opposite bank, the Holz bridge and Reimer's bridge being already in flames; the Grasskeller was already half in the grip of the

destroyer. In front were the old Exchange, the Senate House, and the Bank; all in the direct path of the fire, and there was scarcely a hope of human aid being able to interpose to save them from destruction. So intense was the heat as it glared across the Deich, that even the stout piles which were driven into the middle of the stream, were set alight, and like strange torches, flared down to the water's edge.

On some of the smaller canals, the sight was even more terrible and strange. The inhabitants, hopeless of saving their treasured goods by transport through the crowded streets, or utterly unable to procure land conveyance, had placed them on boats and ship-board; when to their horror, what was once a water-way became a path of fire! The oil, the turpen-

tine, and other inflammable liquids, released from their frail bonds, flooded the streets, and floated on the stream. Soon they became heated, burst into flames, and boats, goods, or whatever living thing had the unhappy chance to be with them, perished alike.

The night brought no relief; and as the morning dawned, even the most hopeful became convinced that no ordinary means would avail to check the ravages of the flames. So long as one house joined another, the fire must spread; the mere contact, or even proximity, was sufficient, from the overpowering heat, and the clouds of burning matter which rained and floated in the air, to ensure destruction of everything within reach. Nothing less than the creation of huge gaps, over which not even the ravenous flames,

driven as they still were by the storm of wind, could leap, would rescue the remainder of the city from devastation.

It was, therefore, resolved to spring into the air, or to shoot down, whatever was likely to form a point of contact between that which already burned, and the uninjured houses. A large house on the Graskeller bridge was the first to be mined and blown up; and this act had the happy effects of checking the fire in that direction. This was followed by more efforts of the same kind, and soon, among other buildings, the old Exchange and the Senate House were levelled with the ground. The fate of the latter was determined by the strong desire to save the Bank; but its destruction was without the hoped for result. The Bank caught fire from within, as was supposed, but

### FIRE AND MORE FIRE.

more probably from the shower of fire which fell upon the roof; and but little of it was saved. Nor, indeed, could all these desperate measures long check the progress of the fire. For awhile the wide chasms made by the sudden levelling of masses of building made the fire pause at the gaps in its advance; but the heat, and the strong wind, and the flood of sparks which poured through the dense atmosphere, soon carried new seeds of destruction abroad, which were fanned into life in regions hitherto untouched.

Then arose a new difficulty. The store of gunpowder was exhausted by repeated explosions, and still no effectual check was given to the fire. In this extremity, by means of the old telegraph, a message was sent to Stade, demanding a thousand pounds of powder; and with such good

will was the order obeyed, that within a few hours an English steam-boat landed at the quay, with not only the powder, but cannon and artillerymen to assist in its use.

And so the terrible hours passed on; in frantic efforts to stem the torrent of destruction by the over-wearied firemen; in the rending, and springing into the air, of mansions and blocks of houses, by the artillery, who had almost superseded the ordinary workers at the engines. And all of little avail. The fire spread, despite every effort to check it. The sky was of a lurid red with the blaze, and the sun obscured by the masses of smoke which rolled above the devoted city. And still there rang the fire-bell, as if men needed to be told of the calamity which drove them forth beggars into the world. The

fire roared, and crackled, and hissed; the arms of the fire engines gave forth their dull thud; the hose spirted their ineffectual jets into the hot air. Still there poured the affrighted, despairing stream of fugitives through the almost impassable streets; hurrying away from their burning homes, to seek rest for awhile in the open places, in the public gardens which surround the town, and out into the open country, where no shelter awaited them but the cold, untainted sky.

No rest, no hope! The fire streamed on its flaming way. Checked in one direction, it only gathered itself together for a while, and then burst on with redoubled force in another. Stayed in its course on the side of St. Catherine's Church, and on the Graskeller bridge, it made its way with all the greater violence

in the direct course of the wind towards the little Alster. Although its path was here strewn with the ruins of houses blown into the air, or shot down by the artillery, it made little of these obstacles; but, pausing, as if for breath, on the edges of the gulphs artificially made to stop its progress, suddenly overleapt the chasm with an angry roar, and passed screaming on its way.

No peace, no rest! For three nights and two days the fire held its fearful revels, and yet there was no hope of the end. Fire everywhere; nothing but fire!

## CHAPTER III.

### A CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS.

IF Hamburg, in her hour of trial, found herself feeble and short-handed in appliances to extinguish the flames which were burning her very heart out ; if, with all the help of her neighbours, she toiled against the insatiable enemy in vain ; it cannot be said that she was equally deficient in the means of self-protection against the foes within her gates. Next to fire-engines, her friends seemed to consider that her great want was soldiers ; and accordingly military were soon on

their way from all the neighbouring states, to protect her from her own populace, at the very time that that populace was being rapidly burnt out of house and home. Doubtless this was merely an exemplification of the continental idea, that the people as a body are always in a state of latent revolution, ready upon the least opportunity to overturn church and state.

Certain it is that the authorities of Hamburg were in as great anxiety to restrain the people as to extinguish the fire. Or rather, it seemed to be considered that the one was as dangerous an element to the state, as the other was to the town, if once let loose; and that there was some invisible sympathy between the two which would make a simultaneous outbreak an exceedingly likely occurrence. In this

spirit it was that a German paper of the day, while chronicling the fact that cannon had been brought from Stade "to shoot down the houses," added, sententiously: "and to curb the people." Another excited journal exclaimed: "The people must be, and can be, only kept in check by force;" while yet another announced that "the people are turbulent, and cry for bread." Therefore, it may be supposed, it was considered advisable to give them cannon-shot, as something likely to occupy their digestion.

With more of truth and charity, one narrator thus describes the demeanour of this (if we may believe their own chronicles) evil-minded population: "One hears at night the sentinels fire, the alarm bells ring, and the night-watchmen cry, and at the utmost one asks where the fire burns.

Thence it comes that, beyond a little knot of curious folk, as a rule it is only the fire-guard and the military who are on their feet. It would appear that this complete shutting out of the people is in the highest degree dangerous. Even now—it is nearly mid-day—the soldiers and firemen, through their continued labour, are exhausted, yet the streets are closed up, the people stand with arms crossed, and only give vent now and then to a fearful cry, as one house after the other falls to the ground, with all the terrible accompaniments of such a scene.”

There can be no doubt, that a feeling of mistrust in the people, in the presence of such a calamity as had befallen the city, paralysed for a time the efforts of those whose especial duty it was considered to be to act on such an occasion. Moreover,

there was much jealousy among the organized firemen, and much clinging to privilege, which checked the admission of strangers into their body, and to a participation of the pecuniary advantages, such as they were, which belonged to its members. In short the "Fire-Quenching Establishment" of Hamburg was a "vested interest," and although a well intentioned, was a very obstinate and short-sighted corporation. This will account for the exclusion of the people from an active participation in the endeavours to extinguish the fire for some time after its outbreak. The so much desired presence of the military, to keep them from open violence, was explained, or excused, on the ground that Hamburg was a great port, with a loose population of seamen of all nations, who were under no effi-

cient subordination from their officers. Who, on the contrary, were released for a time, from their ordinary discipline, and therefore a dangerous element to control at such a moment of alarm and confusion. Add to this, the inveterate conviction, from settled habits of thought in that direction, among continental communities, that nothing can under any circumstances be done without soldiers, and the accumulation of military from the sister Free States, Bremen and Lubeck; from Denmark, from Hanover, from Brunswick, and from Prussia, may very readily be accounted for. Doubtless, too, the necessity for the demolition of so many houses, in their efforts to check the progress of the flames, rendered them a desirable addition to the over-worked soldiers of the State.

But if, in the first moment of the outbreak, these stiff formalities of social discipline were allowed to prevail, the overwhelming nature and force of the evil which had burst upon the city swept all such petty impediments in the way of the full exercise of the energies of the people on one side. The Senate, which, it must be acknowledged, maintained its dignity and asserted its authority through all this terrible crisis, with admirable prudence and firmness, adapted itself to the necessities of the moment, and on the second day of the disaster made a general call for volunteers. It was done in this wise : On the morning of the 6th, it had become evident that a certain portion of the city must be abandoned to the flames. It was determined to take up several strategic positions, and fortifying them, so to say,

against the progress of the fire, endeavour to confine its ravages within those limits. The Senate issued an announcement to this effect, and marked the boundaries to which it was sought to circumscribe the fire as being: "the Little Alster, and the larger canals between the Haven and the old Exchange, and, if possible, Johannis Platz." The area thus marked out included many hundred houses, and some of the most important buildings of the town.

In order to carry out this intention with success, the house-owners on the borders of the ground thus yielded to the common enemy, as well as those in its more distant neighbouring, were earnestly entreated to watch the "roofs, ridges, and gutters of their houses," against their ignition from the cloud of fire-sparks; and to be pre-

pared with leathern-buckets and wet coverings, to extinguish any outbreaks of fire which might occur from these causes. Further, the announcement went on to say, that, "although the pressure of many people at the fire engines, during an ordinary conflagration was not, with due regard to order, a thing to be desired, yet now the help of all good citizens to relieve the worn out firemen, was necessary."

As if this were not enough, and that the habitual restraints put upon the people had rendered them apathetic in their response to this appeal, there was issued the same day from the head police office, the following :

" Call for Volunteers for help to quench the fire.

" In order to give some relief to the fire-

men and soldiers employed at the fire-engines, all citizens and inhabitants are hereby urgently entreated to render the said workers all possible assistance."

This "Call" was earnestly and promptly responded to. People of all classes thronged to the fire-engines, which, now stationed at the edges of the space given up to destruction, poured in stream upon stream of water, in their endeavours to prescribe the extent of the conflagration. It was no wonder that, among the first to avail themselves of this opportunity for action, were our old friends—accompanied by many of their fellow-workmen—Watson, Wilson, and Jackson.

## CHAPTER IV.

### WILSON AND COMPANY, AGAIN.

FIRST, a word or two upon a certain class of the population of Hamburg, for whose benefit many of the police regulations were made. Hamburg is a pleasure-loving city, and would scarcely feel called upon to blush if it were described as a gay, a rollicking—nay, an immoral city. Perhaps this is due to the seafaring portion of its inhabitants already referred to; but certainly its Very Honourable Senate, so far from taking any means to fix or regulate this loose portion of the populace, affords it every opportunity and encourage-

ment. It is more dissolute than it is vicious, and more thoughtless than either; but it is a mad, wild, impudent, dancing, grog-drinking, bagnio-seeking section of a very honest, sober population, which might very well be put in the shade, instead of being flaunted in the daylight in public halls and promenades. Good nature and jollity give it countenance, however, and the Senate makes money out of it.

But these gay roysterers are not the kind of people to be depended on in a grave crisis, and it was probably this class for whose due restraint the authorities were so anxious to accept the offers of military assistance from their neighbours. How they spent the grim, grizzly time may be well imagined: some danced on unheeding to the music of their nasal flageolets and shrill piccolos; some took

it to be a kind of carnival, with the unusual accompaniments of smoke and stench, and a fire-work of innumerable sparks, with a background of blazing houses. Some, more keen-witted than the rest, might have perceived in it a new concession from the Senate-house for their own especial gratification—a raree show for the denizens of Damm-thor-wall under the express control of the police. Some, we know, buried themselves in beer and grog-cellars ; and in company with their female harp-players and singers, became mad or stupid, according to constitutional incapacity, till the fire was upon them. They only rushed into the glare when it was too late to escape its ravenous heat, and were licked up by the flames, or else were entombed in the steamy holes they had made filthy by their presence.

Now, although Watson, Wilson, and Jackson were, one or other of them, if not all, just the kind of loose fish to disport with delight in the peculiarly muddy waters supplied by the Senate for their gratification; and had already, as the members of an English factory of engineers in the Grass Markt, made themselves sufficiently notorious, they were not bad fellows at bottom. It is true they were well-known as hard drinkers, hard swearers, and hard hitters; but putting aside these weaknesses, they were acknowledged to have their good qualities, and they did wonders at the fire. They had their enemies too, and by some unexplained accident some of their fellows had become identified with the fire in a terrible way. It had happened that flames had suddenly burst forth in places de-

tached from the main conflagration, doubtless ignited by flying sparks falling upon very inflammable material ; but this fact, exaggerated by rumour, and the terribly rapid advances of the fire, gave rise to a suspicion that the flames were being spread by incendiaries. The public imagination, heated by its fears and the general excitement, pictured bands of armed ruffians, creeping from house to house with lighted links in their hands, bent upon 'making the city a heap of blazing devastation. These suspicions fell upon the English workmen of the Grass Markt, and more than one of them was terribly handled by the exasperated crowd.

Watson, Wilson and Jackson—they were usually found in company—worked with a will at the engines ; formed links in a chain of bucket bearers ; dashed into

half burnt abandoned houses to save property, or rescue life, with the same careless energy that they exhibited in their amusements. Presently we find them with a group of artillerymen, who were laying a train preparatory to blowing a house into the air. They had no business there, but they looked as though they had, and whether they had or not was to them a matter of perfect indifference.

“Stand back, men!” cried the officer in command, as all was declared to be ready. “Mark the word—fire!”

A fizzing snake of light wriggled along the ground from where they stood into the shadow of the wall beyond. It there sparkled more brightly for an instant, then suddenly died out.

“Missed fire!” cried Wilson.

There was a hasty expression of anger

officer, and a man was ordered forward to see to the fuse, but he either did not hear, or hesitated to obey, the word of command.

"I'll go!" cried Watson, springing to the front. "Give me the powder-flask."

"Who are you?" demanded the officer. "Stand back!"

"Blazes," answered Watson with a grin. He had possessed himself of the powder-horn from the by no means reluctant hand of the soldier.

"All' right, Captain," he added, with a pull at his forelock. "Let me go. You needn't be afraid; I know how to manage a fuse."

And he started on his errand, heedless of the reiterated command from the officer to "stand back."

"Stop!" shouted Wilson. "Where are

you going to, you fool? Do you want to have your head blown off?"

"All right!" shouted Watson in reply.  
"I'm going in for it."

He had scarcely uttered the last word, ere a bright light leapt up into the sky; there was a roar, and an upheaving of black masses from the ground, and then a hoarse rumble which rolled towards them, and seemed to vibrate in the earth beneath their feet. The fuse, spite of its sluggishness, had been true to its work, and the mine was sprung.

"Lord help us and save us!" groaned Wilson. "Where's Watson now?"

A cry of pity came from the knot of soldiers, who had witnessed the hazardous adventure of the young Englishman. When the patter of fragments after the explosion had ceased falling, and while the

smoke still rolled in slow eddies along the ground, several of them ran forward, and with them Wilson, to see what fate had befallen him. But they sought in vain. Huge blocks of brick work, broken slabs of stone, timbers smashed and split, and a confused litter of tiles covered the ground ; but no trace of a human being, living or dead, was to be seen. The moments were too precious, and the chance of finding the body in time to save the life, even if it were not already beaten out of it, was too remote to permit them to devote much time to the search. With a few words of commiseration, they turned from the spot to proceed with their work of demolition.

Wilson, however, still lingered behind, scanning every foot of ground ; peering into cavernous recesses formed by the blocks rent and tossed asunder by the

explosion, in search of his lost friend. Unconsciously he wandered further and further, till warned by a dense shower of sparks, and by the shouts of distant voices, of the dangerous position in which he stood, he gave up the search with a sigh, and looked about to provide for his own safety. He had approached a shattered block of houses, half consumed, which had been shot to pieces by artillery, and now showed the ragged ends of walls, and projecting timbers ; a shapeless, miserable wreck. It appeared to him safer to seek an outlet through the basement of one of these houses, than to retrace his steps ; at any rate it seemed to be a shorter way out of the ruins. As he plunged over the broken ground towards the nearest cellar, a terrific explosion shook the earth, and threw him forward on his knees ; then

there rained upon him a torrent of dust, mingled with flakes of fire, with here and there a burning brand. Wilson scrambled to his feet, and ran forward.

“Thank you for the light!” he exclaimed, as he seized a flaming stake which had fallen directly in his path, and with it dashed into the dark, lower story of the house immediately before him. He came out by the front cellar door, with the stake still burning in his hand; but had scarcely clambered up the broken stone steps into the street, ere he was met by an infuriated mob of men, who fell upon him with blows and execrations.

“Down with him!” they shouted with hoarse voices, in Low German. “A house burner!” “Strangle him!” “To the guardhouse with him!” “Kill him—a house-burner!” “Trample him under foot!”

With such fearful cries ringing in his ears, and furious hands tearing and striking him, Wilson struggled in vain amidst his crowd of assailants. The blood was streaming down his face, and he was fast losing consciousness, when some one in authority interposed on his behalf, and rescued him from impending death. At least, so it appeared to his stunned senses, as he was now borne along between men in uniform, who in a rough way treated him with evident commiseration. Presently he was seated on a bench, in a close room, and a voice he well knew cheered him with its sound :

“Holloa, Wilson, is that you? Hold up man !”

It was Jackson.

“Well, I suppose it’s me,” answered Wilson, dreamily ; “but I don’t know

much about it. This comes," he added, wiping a little stream of blood from his forehead that was fast trickling into his eyes, "This comes of trying to help a set of thundering fools of foreigners, who don't know how to help themselves."

"Never mind that," answered Jackson, coaxingly. "Where's Watson?"

"Gone to 'kingdom come,' I am afraid," replied Wilson, with more feeling and solemnity, than his words implied. "I expect he's got a whole house on his back. He said he was going in for it."

And so it turned out. Watson had gone in for it—and he never came out again.

## CHAPTER V.

### BURNT OUT.

THE artillery might thunder and flash, tearing with iron shot wide gaps in the streets; whole blocks of houses might be hurled into the air by the force of the gunpowder exploded beneath them; the fire scarcely halted for a moment, or swerved from its track for all these desperate efforts at suppression. On the contrary, it leapt over yawning chasms, or made a path of flames of that which should have been a water course; thirsting, ravenous, insatiable. It spread towards St. Peter's

church on the one hand, and the Jungfernstieg on the other. A Hanoverian battery of twelve-pounders thundered in vain against the houses on the Berg to stop its progress towards the church; and the Little Alster, though a broad channel, was no barrier against its ravages towards the Alster Basin.

At one time, the New Exchange was almost given up as lost; for although it stood in an open space, and the houses which had hemmed it in most closely had been sprung, the whole surrounding neighbourhood was in a blaze. It was only through the personal heroism of the foreman of works, Herr Dölcke, and the aid of Smith's water-works at the Holz-dam on the Alster, that the beautiful edifice was saved. Smith's water-works — an English intrusion, much opposed by the

Hamburger firemen—threw such a volume of water upon the whole building, directed by Dölcke, who stood upon the copper roof till the soles of his feet were burned, that the fire could not touch it, and it escaped while all around it was destroyed.

St. Peter's, the oldest church in Hamburg, with a smooth, pointed spire, four hundred and sixteen feet in height, fell a prey to the flames, in spite of the almost unparalleled exertions of hundreds of zealous workers. The wooden framework of the spire was ignited by the heat of its metal sheathing, and when the spire fell, its apex plunged point downwards to the ground, burying itself twelve feet in the earth.

The Johanneum, a college and gymnasium, was saved from the general wreck,

by the persistent exertions, during twelve hours, of two English naval captains and the crews of their ships, who worked the Hamburg engine.

The space which the Senate, in their extremity, had abandoned to the flames, was already devoured and past; the raging monster with which they had to contend would hold no such truce with its victims, but pressed greedily on to new conquests. In the direction of the old Jungfernstieg—the Maiden's Walk—whole streets blazed for awhile, and then sank into ashes, and the heat and flame still drew on with frightful rapidity towards this much-loved resort of the citizens in their hours of relaxation. Its row of stately houses overlooking the pleasant waters of the Alster; its alleys of lime trees stretching along the water's edge; its elegant pa-

vilions; the trim pleasure-boats which fluttered on the surface of the light waves; its thronged walks, its gaiety, and its music, had long rendered the Jungfernstieg the pride of the Hamburgers, and the delight of all who visited it.

And now it seemed doomed to destruction. Threatened from two sides, the eddies of smoke already rolled among its houses and its trees, and the fiery storm of sparks poured down upon it, the cruel harbingers of its fate. Neuerwall was already in full blaze, and this street led directly to the Jungfernstieg; while from behind, although the flames had been checked at the Grosse Bleichen, where they had flared across the bridge of that name, by the demolition of a large mansion which was blown into the air, they found a way

across the König's bridge. Thus attacked, from the rear, and from the side, the destruction of the Jungfernstieg became inevitable.

What grief, what terror this new disaster created! Already the number of the fugitives from the houses levelled with the dust, and those which were threatened with the same fate, amounted to thirty thousand persons. Old and young; men, women, and children; sick and hale; of all ranks and conditions were they. Some had escaped with nothing but the clothes they wore; others, again, had rescued only so much as they could carry, and that chiefly bedding; while many who had been able to obtain the use of waggons and other vehicles, had carried the bulk of their household goods with them, but unable to find refuge elsewhere, now

bivouaced in the street, with their property huddled rudely together. It had happened, again and again, that they had been driven from one resting place to another, as the fire advanced; first into public squares and beneath church walls; then on to the promenades which skirted the town on the site of the old fortification; and finally, out of the city gates into the highways and open fields.

At every fresh remove something had to be abandoned, so that the streets were strewn with fragments of the wreck of many homes. From thirty to a hundred marks were demanded for the simplest conveyance, and for the most part nothing of the kind was to be obtained. The crush in the narrower streets among the fire-engines, the waggons loaded with goods, the trains of artillery, and the

unhappy foot-passengers burdened with bedding, with children, or old and sick relatives, was terrible to witness.

On the Jungfernstieg, all these evils culminated in one frightful disaster. From the first it had been chosen as a favourite place of refuge; the space was large, the *allées* of lime trees afforded a certain shelter, and here at least the most despairing felt themselves in safety from the fire. The accumulation of goods, therefore, of every imaginable description, from the costly furniture of the wealthy, to the miserable chattels and dilapidated utensils of the needy, was immense; and unhappy enough was the condition of the owners, pacing around their rescued property by day, and huddling beneath its shelter by night. But now, wretched as they were, helpless as they were in the face

of the calamity which had befallen the city, they were called upon for new exertions, fresh sacrifices, or to abandon all they had striven so hard to save.

The fire was gaining upon them from moment to moment. To make room for the numberless fire-engines, which were now gathering on this spot, for a last effort to rescue the row of mansions overlooking the Alster from the fire; to prevent the accumulation of property collected on the shore from being utterly destroyed, should the fire prevail; it became necessary to remove the cherished household goods to some remote place of safety. To affect this with any rapidity, with the limited means of conveyance at command, was simply impossible. Hence ensued a scene of confusion, of terror, of anguish, only equalled by the disorderly flight of a routed

army. The cries and wails of women and children; the shouts and bitter outbursts of anger of men excited beyond endurance, were heard on all sides. While above all arose the din of the fire-engines; some already at work, some clattering through the maze of furniture heaped up in disorder on every available spot; the more distant thunder of the artillery; the explosions of powder, as house after house was hurled into the air.

Little indeed of the household furniture could be saved. So far as conveyance could be obtained, the heavier goods were carted away. Whatever could be carried by hand was removed; but for the rest, much was placed aboard boats and pleasure craft; much was thrown recklessly into the water, in the feeble hope that it might hereafter be drawn to land;

the remainder was abandoned in despair.

But the cup of bitterness was not yet full. All the efforts of the firemen, with an unlimited supply of water, backed as they were by the Alster, could not check the overpowering mass of fire with which they had to contend. Not by slow degrees, but by rapid bounds, the flames leaped from house to house, till the whole range became a burning wall.

The excitement was intense as the fire thus spread towards the western or new city; for it was felt that unless it could be stayed from further progress in that direction, the whole of Hamburg would be destroyed. The fire-engines were therefore withdrawn from the main front of the blazing row of building, and massed at the western end; and by directing the entire

force at their command against this portion of the range, together with the simultaneous demolition by gunpowder of an immense block of houses in the same quarter, not only was the new Jungfernstieg saved, but the flames were arrested in their course towards the west.

Meanwhile the work of destruction went on with fearful rapidity among what remained of the inflammable mass of goods collected along the Alster bank. It was not alone that all which was on land soon made so many flaring heaps; even the pieces of furniture which had been taken on ship-board caught fire from the increased shower of sparks and burning fragments which poured down upon them; so that the water-itself seemed ablaze. Hundreds of vessels, partly to save the lives of those on board from a terrible

death by fire ; partly to prevent the burning of the ships down to the water's edge, were scuttled by their owners, and thereby much valuable property in gold, silver and artistic work was sunk to the bottom of the lake. Thus one misfortune led to another, and no human labour or precaution seemed to avail against the terrible enemy who attacked all alike, and seemed on all sides unassailable.

Already one bank of the Inner Alster was a broad sheet of flame, and the other bank, which formed the angle of the square, seemed destined to meet the same fate. Smith's water-works, which had played a distinguished part in the salvation of the New Exchange, met the fate it had helped to avert from its noble neighbour. Its tall, tower-like form held out long against the flames, even when all else around it was

destroyed ; but it fell at last. The Zucht House, and the Spinn House, prisons for the punishment respectively of minor and greater offences—the former a massive building covering a large space on the very edge of the Alster—were simultaneously attacked and speedily devoured. The prisoners had been previously removed to the St. George's quarter of the town, and to the goals in Glückstadt. All classes and conditions suffered alike. Thrice had the Senate, which held permanent sittings, from the commencement of the conflagration to its termination, been forced from its place of meeting by the advance of the flames ; now, even the criminals—many of them with iron fetters clanking about their legs and feet—were led under strong escort of infantry and cavalry through the hot, glaring street to the shore of the

Elbe, and there embarked to other quarters for safe keeping. Thus noble and base alike were driven at the mercy of the raging element to seek new homes, whether it were palace or prison.

The night of Saturday drew on, the third day of the calamity; and although the fire seemed checked on the western side of the city, at the end of the old Jungferensteig, it roamed almost at will towards the south-east, parallel with the shore of the Alster. Alas! for the thousands of wanderers, exhausted and woe-begone! Driven from street to street, from square and public place, to the verge of the city, and finally into the open country itself, they sought rest in vain. They were without shelter, almost without food; only the shattered remnants gathered about them of what but a few days, nay, a few hours, before, had

made up their happy homes ! Alas ! for them ! They had cowered before the dust, the keen wind, and the night dews ; now there came on a storm of rain ; pelting, drenching rain ; pouring in pitiless showers the whole night through, and filling their cup of wretchedness to the brim. Alas ! for the strong man bending before the storm ! Alas, for the women and children, sobbing and complaining, as they huddled together beneath the little shelter their goods afforded them ! Alas, for the aged, the sickly, and the stricken, for this last outburst of the waters of heaven, following upon the devastation of the fires of the earth, was to them a prelude of death.

In the midst of this torrent of rain, the chapel of St. Gertrude took fire and burnt to the ground ; so little effect did the outpouring water have upon the terrible fur-

nace which the seat of the conflagration had become. But the end was approaching. The explosion of houses, or the tearing of them to pieces by cannon shot, went on with increased vigour. There was now a large body of troops of all arms, but chiefly artillery, in the city, and the array of fire-engines, collected from every neighbouring village, and from many distant towns, was very formidable. The last public building which perished in the flames, was the House of Detention. The Magdalen Cloister, indeed, caught fire, and for a moment it was feared that through it a gate might be opened for the flames to enter, and destroy the district of St. George; but the energy with which the fire-engines from Kiel and Lubeck, newly arrived, poured in their streams of water upon the threatened

building, arrested the course of the fire in that direction, and practically checked its further progress.

By Sunday afternoon the fire had ceased to spread, and its smouldering remains flickered and darkened beneath the augmented efforts of the firemen. All further danger was felt to be at an end, and the exhausted inhabitants, for the first time since the outbreak, began to think that they were at liberty to rest. For nearly four days the fire had raged almost uncontrolled, and had destroyed fully a fourth of the city. Seventy-one streets and public places had become a mere waste, cumbered with their own ruins. Nearly two thousand houses had been levelled with the dust, not to reckon the booths, sheds, and other out-buildings, which numbered as many more. Nearly

twenty-two thousand of the inhabitants of Hamburg, not including children, were rendered houseless and homeless. It was estimated that forty thousand persons in all, had suffered more or less from the fire; and of these at least two hundred had been severely wounded, or had met with a violent death. So much for the hard, dry statistics of the calamity. But who can sum up its mental griefs, its physical suffering, its incipient evils? Its patent fruits were ruin and death! Ten millions of pounds sterling was the estimated aggregate loss in hard money—a poor item when set against the heart-pangs, the enduring sorrows, the death struggles of the sufferers.

## CHAPTER VI.

### DIED IN HOSPITAL.

WHILE the events were in progress which had made the proud city of Hamburg in great part a heap of ashes; had turned its gaiety into tears and lamentations; the chief actors in our story have been passed over. Let us now return to them.

Herr Urlacher, more seriously contused than was at first supposed; wearied in body and prostrated by mental anxiety; had joined Amalie at Wandsbeck, in the house of the Widow Frœbel. Thither

terrible rumours of the havock made by the fire were wafted on every wind, or were told in mournful strains by the fugitives from the burning city. Of Herr Hugo Ritzenheim nothing had been heard, since the moment he had parted with Urlacher and Amalie near the church porch of St. Nicolas.

The wound in Christian's arm had rendered him totally unable to afford any further assistance in quenching the flames, and he remained under the roof and in the kind care of Anacharsis Blitz, in the Shaar Markt. In so far that is to say, as that amiable individual, who was unsparing in his exertions at the fire, was able to devote attention to him. Karl Rostock and Jacob never parted company during the remainder of the crisis; they worked, ate, and slept together, so far as the exigencies

of the time allowed them to eat or sleep. Now, however, that the danger was past, Herr Rostock had gone home to bed; leaving strict orders with his servant that he should be awakened "every ten hours;" lest in his excessive weariness he should sleep for ever. Jacob, equally fatigued, had once more taken up his quarters, on the invitation of Herr Blitz, with his dear friend Christian.

Christian sat by the window, looking into the market-place, and glanced now and again at the simple bed in the corner where Jacob lay, buried in slumber, although the day was already far advanced. Christian's arm was in a sling, but the wound was rapidly healing. His thoughts, although pensive, ran in a tranquil current; for the mental fever, consequent upon the disappointment of his most

cherished hopes, had subsided, and left a silent melancholy behind, which he had not yet summoned energy enough to overcome. The incidents of the fire, terrible as they were in themselves, had exerted a tranquillising influence on his mind, so far as he himself had played a part in them. It was something, he felt, to have had an opportunity of rising above the petty jealousies, the merely interested motives which govern men under the sting of failure, and to have made a worthy use of that opportunity. But it was more, infinitely more, to have been able to efface a stain from his own self-consciousness; to have wiped away a reproach from the hearts and memories of those whose respect he coveted. That he had saved the life of Herr Urlacher—that life which had been once in jeopardy from his own hand

—was an unalloyed consolation, soothing the bitterness of his defeat, and tempering his mind to submission.

Hamburg lay in the torpor which succeeds a period of inordinate activity. She was heavy with sleep, and stunned by the blow which she felt to her very heart's core, the full effects of which she had not realised. Strangers thronged her streets, and other soldiers than her own, held watch and ward around the ruins of what had been among her most valued possessions. There was the din of activity in her haven—two hundred vessels had entered the port during the conflagration—and every hour brought fresh succour, the result of the generous outburst of sympathy which aroused all Germany to her aid. But Hamburg lay prostrate, breathing indeed, but dumb and inanimate.

Christian, from where he sat, could see the troops bivouaced in the market-place; could hear the klirr and ring of their weapons; and from the distance, now and again, the clear notes of the bugle. Otherwise, there was a stillness and a suppression, as it were, unnatural to the city, and which contrasted mournfully with the fearful clamour, the mad discord of contending sounds, which had but lately made the whole region a hell upon earth.

“Dear old Hamburg!” murmured Christian, half aloud. “I have seen thee in thine utmost gaiety; I have seen thee in thy moments of dire peril and anguish; a little while, and I shall see thee no more!”

Turning from the window, he saw that Jacob was awake, and blinking with half-opened eyes at the strong daylight.

"Where does it burn now?" he asked, sitting up, and looking dreamily around him.

"It is the daylight, Jacob," answered Christian, "and not the fire that dazzles thee. The fire is out, thank God!"

"I can scarcely believe it," mused Jacob. "It is in my eyes and ears, still. I dreamt I was at the bottom of the sea, and the fire was burning down to me through a hole in the water."

"And what then?"

"I stopped the hole up with a barrel of gunpowder; set light to it with a torch, thinking to blow the fire into the air, but only set fire to the sea instead."

"And awoke in the blaze. My advice to thee, Jacob, is to turn round and go to sleep again. The fire is veritably extinguished, and thou hast need of rest."

Jacob, however, insisted that he had had sleep enough, and was soon making his simple toilet. When he had finished, he sat down in front of Christian, and after much pressing, succeeded in gaining his permission to dress his wounded arm. This he did with the utmost care and tenderness.

“Another week,” said Jacob, as he gently fastened the last bandage, “and thou wilt be a man again.”

“Yes, sound in the flesh, perhaps,” replied Christian, with a faint smile. “But,” he added, as a sombre expression overspread his face, “in the spirit, never more.”

Jacob looked with surprise and curiosity into the eyes of his friend, while Christian, meeting the earnest gaze fairly, laid his hand upon his companion's shoulder, and said :

“There are many things, Jacob, which need to be discussed between us; things which in the confusion of the fire have been forgotten, or laid aside for a more fitting time. Now the time has come. And first about Botzen.”

“The rascal!” involuntarily ejaculated Jacob. “The fire has been the saving of him. Had it not been for that, I should have hunted him out before this. But I have not done with him yet.”

“I am not so sure of that, Jacob. The fire, I suspect, has dealt with him more roughly than thou or I would dare to do. It may have done with him for this world. Listen.”

Christian then related the incidents of the rescue of Herr Urlacher, as much from the clutches of the would-be thief, as from the flames; and told of the

mad rush, all ablaze as it seemed, of Botzen out of the burning house. These events were already partly known to Jacob—that is the outline of the story—but the identity of one of its chief actors with the tramping brewer, the some-time companion of their travels, and the thief who had robbed him of what he valued most of all, was so utterly new and surprising to him, that he sat listening with open eyes in all the wondering eagerness of his simple nature.

“And so, Jacob,” concluded Christian, “thou see’st, it is more than probable that the fire has in this case been an angry avenger, and that the miserable wretch has perished through his own villany.”

“May be, may be,” murmured Jacob, still gazing in an abstracted manner in the

face of his companion. "But—let me remember; one cannot think of all things at once, and the fire has almost burnt everything but itself out of my head. Let me remember," he continued musingly, "let me remember. Yes!" with a sudden flash of recollection. "That's him! Think'st thou, Christian, that this rascal snatched the casket out of Urlacher's hand as he ran past thee?"

"No, I should say not; but it would be hard to tell. It seemed to me that it was his own pain and terror which drove him headlong onwards, reckless or blind to whatever stood in his way."

"But he hustled against you both, and at that moment the casket was lost?"

"Just so; but it might have been dashed out of Herr Urlacher's hand by the shock. And the flames being upon us, there was

no time to search for it. It was enough that we saved our lives."

"If it was thrown on the ground, we may cry, 'Amen' to it, for that would be its destruction. The flames flushed over that spot soon after; and neither steel nor stone, gold nor gems, could bear the brunt of such a meeting. One and all would melt like wax, or crumble into dust before them."

"Just such dust, and just such molten wax have, I fear, all the treasures of my poor old master become. His costly furniture, his rich stuffs, were consumed in his own house, or within the walls of St. Nicolas' church. And unless some miracle has interposed to save the contents of that ebony casket—contents, I feel certain, whether in deeds, or in goods of solid worth, the most valuable of his posses-

sions—there can remain little indeed to stand between him and poverty.”

“And yet, Christian,” said Jacob eagerly, “I now perfectly well remember, that while working at the engine, there was a great talk about some wretched creature who had escaped from a house in the Deich Strasse, and who was taken into the hospital with the skin peeling from his flesh. All he did was to rave about some precious casket, he had either lost in the fire, or which had been taken from him since his escape.”

“That must have been Botzen.”

“So I think, now. I thought little of it at the time I heard it. Even that story, terrible as it was, drifted out of my mind before the flood of our other troubles.”

“Then you did not learn whether this

man had really lost the casket in the fire, or whether it had been taken charge of?"

"No, I never asked. I pitied the poor wretch from my heart; and my impression was and is, that he had lost all he owned in the world, and had imperilled his life in endeavouring to save it."

"And did he die?"

"I cannot tell thee, Christian. I think not; for I heard of him afterwards—in the course of the next day or so—as still living, and as still raving about his treasure."

"Where was that, Jacob?"

"At the hospital in the Kurzen Mühren. He may have died there since; but if he live, we may learn all about him. And this casket, if he saved it at all, may yet be found."

"But was not the hospital burned with the Spitaler Strasse?"

"No, heaven forbid! All behind it was burned, but that escaped. He may be safe in it—making a new skin perhaps—the rascal!"

"He certainly did not escape with a whole one out of his last roguery."

"Poor devil, no! I little thought when my heart was bleeding for the poor creature, whom the fire had flayed and singed up to the last hair of his head, that I was pitying the rogue who had stolen my ring."

"Not forgetting thy boots," added Christian smiling.

"Well!" exclaimed Jacob, with a gulp at something that rose in his throat, "I think I could forgive him the boots; but for the ring—goodness knows!"

"Thou wilt forgive him that, too, Jacob," interrupted Christian. "Look!"

He held up in his fore-finger and thumb the small gold ring with the single turquoise.

"My ring! Winnie's ring!" shouted Jacob, in mingled joy and wonder. "Is it possible. Where did it come from? How camest thou by it?" Such were the rapid questions that passed from his lips, as he took the ring tenderly in his hand, as if he feared that, handled too roughly, it might take wing, or be otherwise spirited away.

"It *is* Winnie's ring!" he cried, quite beside himself, and forgetful of the questions he had put a moment before. "I had never hoped to see it again, and here it comes into my hand as if it had flown through the air, or risen out of the ground."

With that he passed it on to his finger, and gave it a hearty kiss. "That's one for Winnie, whether she likes it or not; and now Christian, thou who art a very magician, tell me how thou camest by it?"

"I came by it in a manner no less surprising to me than to thee, Jacob, and which has given to it an interest it never possessed before. It came to me with a sorrow, the bitterest that has fallen on my life. I do not ask thee, Jacob, to share it with me—may the ring bring to thee nothing but love's joy!—but it is the last link in a story which runs thus:"

Jacob sat with wondering eyes, wrapped in the most absorbed attention, as Christian related, in simple but effective language, the tale of his life's hope and disappointment. No listener could have been

more fitted, both from his simple nature and his warmth of heart, to give the utmost sympathy to the actor in such a story. But when, in that actor stood his friend Christian, to him the very model of wisdom, dignity, and honour, the sympathies of Jacob became so vividly excited, that he could not remain silent during the recital. He found vent for his emotion in exclamations, sudden questions, and incoherent outbursts of surprise or pain. When the story was concluded, he took his friend by the hand.

“Ah!” he cried, “how could I know all that was in thy heart, Christian! Thou, with the calm face, and the wise words! I thought only of my own troubles; and never once dreamed, when I went to thee for sympathy and comfort, that thou thyself might'st stand in need of both.”

“So a smooth face may hide a ruffled bosom, Jacob; we are all such hypocrites, more or less.”

“What wilt thou do?”

“Leave Germany for England. I shall be in London in less than a fortnight.”

“Alone?”

“Ay, if need be. I shall find company enough in the land of the Briton.”

“Yes; among prize-fighters, beer-drinkers, and bull-dogs. Let me go with thee, Christian.”

“With all my heart; but why leave Hamburg? Young hands like thine will be much needed here, and thou wilt be the nearer to Winnie.”

“It may as well be a day’s march as a mile; the broad sea as a narrow brook, since I may not be in Leipsic for the next three years. Besides, Hamburg will have

to be dug and delved; the mason and bricklayer must go to work before the carpenter. I have a good six months to spare."

"Let it be so, then, Jacob," replied Christian, extending his hand. "We go to London together. But there is a thing to be done first, which must be done at once. I would almost give my life to discover the lost casket of Herr Urlacher. Now, Botzen may know something of its whereabouts; and whatever he knows may be forced out of him by you or I, with the evil evidence we could bring against him. He cannot yet have recovered so far as to leave the hospital. Let us go there on the instant, and we may do an honest man a service and circumvent a rogue."

"I am with thee, Christian. Though I

begin to pity the poor fellow, now that I have my ring. No doubt the cunning fox made more by giving it away than by selling it; but the end of it is that I am the winner."

"Come then," said Christian. "We shall have a wide circuit to make. If we are stopped by the guard, or the firemen, our password must be the 'hospital.'"

The object of their journey lay at the other end of the city. As the whole space where the fire had raged was in possession of the military, and such engines and firemen as it was thought necessary to keep on the alert in case of any fresh outbreak, they had to make their way, first by the water-side, and so by a wide detour to the end of the Spitaler Strasse. They arrived, however, at the hospital gate without meeting with any serious impediment, and

demanded at once to be shown to the bedside of one Botzen, brewer.

"The ward and number of his bed?" asked the official in attendance.

The visitors were ignorant of both. The name of the man they sought was Botzen—that was all they could say—Frederick Botzen.

"We don't deal with names here," remarked the attendant; "so long at least as the patient lives. What ailed him?"

"Burnt in the fire; from the hair of his head to almost the soles of his feet."

"Look at the dead list," suggested a second official who had joined the party. "I think I know the man. If so, he had too many holes in his skin to keep the breath in him, even if he had fifty lives."

The first attendant searched a massive book for a few moments, and then read aloud :

“ ‘ May the eighth : Of exhaustion from extensive burns, Frederick Botzen, journeyman brewer. Native of Hanau. Aged twenty-two. Died delirious.’ ”

“ ‘ That’s the man !’ ” whispered Jacob, “ ‘ Raving to the last.’ ”

“ Did he leave nothing behind him ? ” eagerly inquired Christian. “ No property of his own or of others ? ”

The officer again referred to the huge tome before him, and read aloud in a sententious voice :

“ No effects.”

Then, shutting the book, he added :

“ That is all, gentlemen. Our records are brief, but they are exact to a letter. Your friend is dead and, I may add, buried.”

“And so also dies and is buried my last hope,” said Christian, as he stood with Jacob by his side at the hospital door. “God help my old master !”

“And his daughter Fräulein Amalie,” devoutly added Jacob, in a sepulchral voice, which he had unconsciously contracted within the gates of the hospital.

“She is betrothed to, let us hope, an honourable man,” added Christian. “May he prove a true and good husband, and through her, a faithful son to the old man. He has need of one.”

## CHAPTER VII.

### OLD RECKONINGS.

THE pang which found utterance on the lips of Christian at the hospital gate in the words, "God help my old master!" had its echoed throb in the breast of Urlacher himself, as he paced with slow steps the peaceful garden of the cottage at Wandsbeck.

"Heaven help me!" was the unconscious exclamation of the old man, as his head drooped on his breast. "I am ruined!"

He knew nothing of the fate of the

miscreant who had wrestled with him in the burning house. To him this man was no more than a prowling thief, who, disappointed in his hopes of plunder by the arrival of Christian, had scarcely saved himself from destruction. He regarded his treasured casket as utterly lost; not wrenched from his grasp by the flying thief, as he passed him, but dashed from his hand on to the causeway, to be afterwards licked up by the advancing flames.

The destruction of the church of St. Nicolas, with all its valuable contents, was already an old story; and one which had been so surpassed by subsequent calamities, that it had ceased to be regarded as a matter of especial regret by the crowd of fugitives who still flocked into the little village. His case he knew was only one of thousands; every hour brought

fresh victims from the scene of the general disaster ; and the assertion of individual loss in such a mass of suffering seemed a merely selfish outcry. So he was silent, as indeed it was in his nature to be. In the solitude of the little garden, as he slowly paced its overshadowed walks, he whispered to his own heart, and his heart echoed back the mournful cry. "Heaven help me—an old man—for I am ruined !"

Soon a light, gentle hand was placed upon his shoulder ; a sweet, earnest face peered round at him from behind ; checked his walk, and laid itself upon his neck.

"Father, let me walk with you," said a pensive voice. It was that of Amalie.

"Come, my child, then, let us walk together," was his reply. He drew his arm round her waist, and she rested her elbow

on his shoulder. They walked on a few paces in silence.

"I wish, father, you were not so thoughtful," said Amalie. "Your thoughts must be grievous, for you look sad."

"I have need to think, Amalie, my child, both for your sake and my own," said Urlacher, with something of his old sternness. "And my thoughts are sad indeed in this hour of calamity."

"The calamity may be less than you suppose, father. We, who are away from the town, do not know all that has happened."

"We know enough, unhappily—" he began, then checked himself with a sudden impulse, and with a forced smile went on: "Perhaps water does not drown—perhaps fire does not burn. Let us hope so at least, and talk of something else, Amalie."

"Oh, you are angry, father, and I have made you so!"

"No, Amalie. I am not angry. I am only weary, weary, weary of my own hopeless thoughts. The fire has burnt up everything else."

"Then let us talk of the fire, and brave it. Let us talk of all the evil it has done, and see if it has spared nothing. Oh, father," she added coaxingly, as she laid her cheek to his, "might it not be well to count up all that is left to us, instead of all that is lost?"

"It will be a much shorter task, I admit," Urlacher replied, with a grim gaiety, "and perhaps more profitable in the end. So come, my lady philosopher, begin."

"Then I shall begin with you, father," smiled Amalie. "You make a first item."

"Flatterer!" exclaimed Urlacher. "Then

I suppose I must take you as the second. Item the first, the old man, Urlacher; item the second, the fair girl, Amalie. Now for the third item?"

Amalie hesitated, and hung her head; something was on her lip which could not find utterance.

"Must I find the third item?" cried Urlacher gaily. "Then since we are among the living chattels, we will take Herr Hugo Ritzenheim as the next."

"I am glad you have remembered him, father," said Amalie quietly, while a shade passed across her face, "for he seems to have forgotten us."

Urlacher turned towards her with a sudden movement, and a sharp flash of the eye.

"No, Amalie; you do not think so?" he demanded. "He is a true man.

Think of the difficulties, the perils among which he lives. Not a sound man was to be spared out of Hamburg, while the flames were devouring his neighbour's lives and goods like stubble in a field, and might at any moment be at his own door. You do not think he has forgotten us, Amalie?"

Urlacher spoke with energy, and with an unconscious perception that his own faith was not quite unshaken.

"No, father," replied Amalie, "no; I cannot think so. Perhaps," and she hung her head again, and a bright blush lighted up her cheek, "perhaps I am too exacting—expect too much from a lover on the eve of my marriage.. It is selfish of me to think I can have him at my beck and call, no doubt, when matters so much more serious demand his attention. But—oh, father!" throwing her arms round Herr

Urlacher's neck, "perhaps I am a wilful, trifling, foolish, spoilt girl, who does not know her own heart!"

Urlacher pressed her gently to his bosom, and kissed her forehead. He assayed, too, such soothing words as occurred to him on the instant. With a little convulsive throb, she drew herself away from him; looked in his face with a smiling lip, a flushed cheek, and a bright eye—all the brighter for the tear that trembled there—as she held him, as it were, at arm's length, a white hand on each shoulder.

"So, father," she exclaimed, "we will take my sweetheart, Hugo, as the third item in the account; and go on with the calculation."

"I am afraid, Amalie," said Urlacher gravely, "that you are unhappy."

"I, unhappy? Oh, no! I am as happy

as I can be—without him, you know,” she added with a short, abrupt laugh. “You wouldn’t have a young girl, so recently betrothed too, *quite* happy in the absence of her lover?”

“Heaven send you all the happiness I wish you!” said Urlacher fervently and solemnly. “And light me out of the gloom in which I lie!”

“What a naughty, foolish girl I am!” exclaimed Amalie, while her face assumed its usually steadfast look. “First, I made you angry, and now I have made you sad. Come, father, we forget we were taking a walk. Come,” taking his arm again, “and I will try and be sensible. Let us talk seriously about these troubles. We have our three items to begin with. You, me, and Herr Ritzenheim—Hugo, I mean. What is the fourth?”

“The rest are soon reckoned,” replied Urlacher, falling into her humour. “House, goods—burned with our old home, or in the church; deeds, securities—lost in the street, and doubtless burned too. The flames ran like a stream of water in its bed through the highway, and destroyed everything before it. What then remains?”

“Friends—credit—good name,” replied Amalie firmly, and with a strong emphasis on each word. “Every one of these is a treasure; so then we have six items in all. Let me go over them again. Father, Amalie, and Hugo; friends, credit, and good name.”

“A poor man’s friends are but few at the best,” said Urlacher, with a languid smile, “and credit and good name are but one. But I will take your figures, Amalie. Have you any other items, my girl?”

"Yes, father, two, which I had almost forgotten : Talent and Reputation. What do you say to them ?" with a triumphant smile.

"They are strong points, Amalie," answered Urlacher, pressing her hand affectionately ; "but there is a set-off against one of them at least—old age."

"Oh, I can't admit that. The latter of them, that is, Reputation, is like wine, and grows better as it grows older ; and for the other, that is inborn, you know, and certainly does not become worse with age. No, they must go down as items seven and eight ; and there, so far as I know, the list must come to an end. Always allowing a margin for salvage ; for who knows what the greedy fire may yet be compelled to disgorge ?"

"Little enough will come out of its

maw," said Urlacher. "What we hold is ours, and that is all."

"But will you listen to me, dear father, while I make out my little balance-sheet? You know we have already given up all as lost that we do not directly possess; that is, we have thrown all our worldly goods into the fire. But *we* remain, dear father: you with your old friends, your credit, your good name, your talent, and your reputation; I, with my love, whatever that may be worth; and Hugo, with his talents and position. And remember, that Herr Ritzenheim has not been burnt out as we have. So that, if you come to sum that altogether, does it not make a goodly balance on the right side? Then, there is something yet to come. You have said, dear father, that you are old—mind, I do not know it, I do not see it, I do

not admit it. But when—when,” Amalie stammered here and looked on the ground, “when I am married, it will be for you to rest, and for Ritzenheim and I—Hugo that is—to work and strive. To be your two earnest, faithful, loving children; and to make you tranquil and happy—oh, so happy! for all your life long, in spite of the fire.”

Amalie’s face now shone, half smiles, half tears, and she pressed Urlacher’s hand between her own to her bosom, as she walked beside him.

“There now, father, will not that make a good balance on our side?”

Urlacher was silent for awhile, but he returned the pressure of her hand, and passing one arm round her shoulder, drew her towards him.

“Thank you for a dear, good girl,” he

said. "Your calculations are beyond the reach of ordinary figures, and I would not tax your account for the world. Your heart is true, Amalie, whatever I might say of your arithmetic; and I believe even in that. Come," he added briskly—Amalie was wiping the tears from her cheeks—"I feel already stronger and better for this. I was growing mopish and cranky; but your brave words have roused me to the proper pitch. I will go to Hamburg at once and see Ritzenheim."

"He will think I sent you," said Amalie, half alarmed.

"No, darling," smiled Urlacher, "I will not tell your secrets. Let him find them out himself—nothing so delightful as the search. But it is time I should see for myself how the old city stands, and hear what the world says in it."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### NEW BECKONINGS.

AWAKENED from the lethargy which oppressed him, Urlacher set about his purpose with his old energy, and in half-an-hour was ready equipped for his journey. He kissed Amalie affectionately, who replied with many entreaties for caution, and an early return. He then set out to walk from the humble suburb into the city.

He had not much more than two English miles before him, but in that distance he came upon innumerable evidences of the

disastrous and wide-spread effects of the fire. Rude encampments lined the road, usually so tranquil, and away in the fields on either side were melancholy tents and other frail erections. These were extemporised by the huddling together of household furniture, covered, here by coarse cloths stitched together, there by matting, or a gay carpet, and in some cases even by a light feather over-bed. Many, indeed, the majority of the fugitives, were without roof or covering of any kind. They had only saved their bedding, now spread out on field or road-way, from the general wreck. The aspect of the whole high-road, and bordering fields, in spite of its melancholy details, had the character of a rough fair, or enormous encampment of gipsies. In many places fires were burning, and food was being cooked.

There was a certain grotesqueness in many of the erections, as well as in the dresses of the people who clustered round them, which might excite a smile; but, taken as a whole, the scene was inexpressibly sad, squalid, and unhappy, and such as would bring tears into the eyes of all who beheld it.

So thought Urlacher, who, although abrupt and unconciliatory in his manner, was no cynic. More than once, and that especially when he came upon some episode in the drama spread out before him, in which young children or women were the forlorn actors—and there were many such—he would raise his hand to brush away the tears from his cheek. Yet, strange to say, he found a certain comfort in the visible signs of suffering and desolation which met him at every step. If

this were selfishness, it was the thoroughly human selfishness common to us all. He felt he was not alone in his trouble. The calamity was so general, that it took from him the power, nay, the very right to complain. The companionship of sorrow made it easier to bear; and by some inscrutable perception, which was not reason, the universality of the disaster seemed to diminish the individual loss.

Sad, but in some measure comforted, Herr Urlacher reached the house of his friend, Ritzenheim. It was well-known to him, for he had formerly occupied it, and his presence there had been so frequent, that he was almost regarded as an inmate. He was at once conducted to the private apartment of the "Herr."

Ritzenheim was seated at his desk, busied with documents; and whether from

the unexpected entrance of his visitor, the nature of his occupation, or some cause not apparent, he received him in a surprised and awkward manner. But if his first greeting was embarrassed and wanting in warmth, he soon recovered his usual suavity of manner, and entered with readiness into the discussion of the universal theme—the fire and its consequences. He excused himself for having omitted to visit his good friend at his retreat, by pleading the overwhelming pressure of occupation arising out of the calamity; although it did not appear that he had taken any active part in the suppression of the fire. He made graceful inquiries after “Fräulein” Amalie, and expressed his supreme grief at the fearful losses which had fallen upon his friend.

“Many a proud citizen,” he exclaimed,

with a melancholy shake of the head, "will rue the day; will mourn in poverty one of the greatest calamities which has befallen our city."

"It will fall heavily on many of us, doubtless," replied Urlacher, "and some will sink beneath the weight. But ours is a wealthy and a generous community. It will find resources sufficient to meet even this great trouble, and charity enough to help the poorer townspeople in their strait."

"My dear sir," cried Ritzenheim, "I fear you scarcely estimate the loss at its full value. Think of a hundred million marks cast into the flames! Imagine, if you can, how such a sum is to be replaced!"

"It is grievous and overwhelming, indeed. But much of this has been

provided for in the shape of insurances."

"A futile provision," continued Ritzenheim, who seemed in the mood to magnify the disaster, and to find a certain satisfaction in its greatness. "The insurers have been leaning on a broken reed, and find themselves in the slough of common ruin. The offices cannot pay. How could they pay eighty millions of marks? And that is the amount of loss they have incurred."

Urlacher groaned and buried his face in his hands.

"Surely this cannot be true!" he exclaimed, raising his head.

"It is in every man's mouth," answered Ritzenheim. "It cannot be otherwise. To pay the claims advanced is a simple impossibility. Happy they who have insured abroad, for they are safe."

"This is the worst stroke of all," mur-

mured Urlacher to himself. "It will make a beggar of me."

"You, now, Herr Urlacher," pursued Ritzenheim, not hearing, or affecting not to hear, the despairing moan of the old merchant, "will have insured your choice and valuable goods in some native office?"

"I have," was the abrupt answer.

"Then Heaven send that you have some other resources; help in that quarter is not to be hoped for," said Ritzenheim, sententiously, as he rose and paced the room.

"And you, Ritzenheim," demanded Urlacher, "have you not endeavoured to protect yourself against such a crisis by the same means?"

"Doubtless, like a prudent man, I have done so. But then, my insurances are effected in England—and would be paid."

"But have you suffered no loss?"

"None whatever; thank Goodness!"

Urlacher sat mute with consternation. In the midst of his losses, heavy as they were, he had relied upon the payment of his insurances for Amalie's dowry; and the idea that she too, for whom he was prepared to make this last sacrifice, would be left penniless, petrified him. He had come to Ritzenheim in a great measure to explain and discuss this very question, and now the ground was passing away from beneath his feet.

Ritzenheim, meanwhile, paced the room in a state of easy composure, and even self-satisfaction; expressing in his looks and manner, the lofty commiseration with which he looked down upon his friend.

"Let us hope," he said in a complacent voice, as he strode slowly backwards and forwards, "that things are not so bad as they seem."

There was an insolent superiority in the tone of his voice which roused Urlacher, for it stung him. He was a man too proud, and hitherto too prosperous, to submit quietly to be pitied, and his heart rose against it.

“I will satisfy myself,” he said, as he stood suddenly erect, “of the truth of these rumours—for rumours, they can only be at present. I shall then be in a position to speak with you, Herr Ritzenheim, upon a matter which, in some measure, brought me hither.”

“You will find these rumours only too true, my dear Herr Urlacher, I grieve to say,” replied Ritzenheim, bending a little from his height of superiority. “But do not, I pray, associate me with these evil tidings, simply because they have come upon you under my roof.”

“I am not likely to hold you to blame for any such mischance,” said Urlacher, with something which might have been a sneer, only that it was spoken too coldly. “Have you any special information of it?”

“Nothing more than such as falls from the lips of men who live upon the knowledge of matters of this kind. I believe it; but then I am not interested in the question.”

“Personally, perhaps not,” retorted Urlacher. “But surely, you are interested in so far as it may concern the prosperity of others?”

“Oh, of course!” answered Ritzenheim, carefully, “I feel for the poor sufferers. It would be heartless not to do so. But really, my dear Herr Urlacher, you seem to take this rumour, as you call it, too

much to heart. Of course it will be a loss the more; but one, I think, which might have been already anticipated in the face of so universal a disaster. To many it will be utter ruin, but to you, although an additional misfortune, and as such to be deplored, it can be no material check."

Urlacher regarded the speaker in silence, but with flashing eyes.

Ritzenheim was still slowly pacing the room, his eyes bent upon the ground, save for an occasional rapid, searching glance, darted into the face of him he addressed.

"You," he continued, "who were so wise as to enclose all your valuable documents in a single ebony casket. Who preserved that casket under your own especial care, and so bore it safely out of the heart of the flames?"

"Are you mocking me?" exclaimed Urlacher.

"Heaven forbid!" answered Ritzenheim, in apparent surprise.

"Do you not know that the casket is lost?"

"Lost!"

"Dashed out of my hand by the villain who would have robbed me. Who, himself overtaken by the fire, can scarcely have escaped with his own life. It fell in the path of the flame, and must inevitably have been consumed."

"Miserable chance!" cried Ritzenheim, halting in his measured tread in the middle of the room.

"Surely you knew of this misfortune?" demanded Urlacher, eyeing him curiously.

"I—I," stammered Ritzenheim; "no!

That is, I had some faint recollection of such an accident, but could not conceive it to be true. You should have given me the casket, Herr Urlacher, and it would have been safe. I entreated you to place it in my hands."

"Would to heaven I had!" Urlacher cried aloud.

"I suppose," continued Ritzenheim, slowly, and with an air of offended pride, "you could not bring yourself to trust me."

"I would have trusted you with untold gold!" exclaimed Urlacher; who, as a man of honour, felt this imputation as a new sting to himself when applied to another. "I would not burden you with such a responsibility."

"An unhappy error," muttered Ritzenheim to himself. "Then, is it possible,

Herr Urlacher, that you have lost all? Can it be that nothing is saved?"

"Nothing!—nothing saved from the grasp of the fire. If this terrible news be true, that my insurances cannot be paid, then am I indeed a ruined man."

"There is no hope of help on that side," said Ritzenheim bluntly. "Were they to a large amount?"

"Barely enough to pay the dowry I had promised you with Amalie. It is on this point, Ritzenheim, I came to speak with you. I knew I had already lost all, and had bent my mind to be content to begin the world afresh, so that I fulfilled my engagement with you and with my dear Amalie. Even now I cannot give up the belief that this is possible. It cannot be that the honourable, wealthy, and proud city of Hamburg will be found wanting in

good faith, even in such a crisis as this. But it may demand time. You may have to wait; and here—”

“My dear Urlacher,” interrupted Ritzenheim, “let us not pursue this subject. It is thoroughly distasteful to me, and must be heart-grieving to you. Anything which should connect the name of Fräulein Amalie with mere mercenary details is too degrading to us all to be discussed. I beg you will say no more.”

“Am I to understand—?” Urlacher began.

“Do not *mis*understand me, I beg,” Ritzenheim interposed again. “I merely deprecate the introduction of pecuniary matters in connection with so charming a lady. I am sure you will forgive me if I say it is unbecoming.”

“Well!” said Urlacher bluntly. “I do,

and I do not, comprehend your meaning. Let it be so—for the present at any rate. Shall we see you at Wandsbeck shortly?"

"Should I not be intruding on your privacy—so soon too; after the late disastrous events?" Ritzenheim inquired blandly. "I would not be wanting in attention or in courtesy for the world, but, under the circumstances—"

"As you please," said Urlacher, as in spite of himself a deep sigh rose to his lips. "Adieu!" With this brief word of parting he strode through the door, and descended into the street.

"So!" mused Ritzenheim, resuming his slow walk. "What I surmised is now an ascertained fact. I have it from his own lips; he is a ruined man, branch and root. What are these insurances? They may, or they may not, be paid—probably

will not be. Half Hamburg is bankrupt; the insurance offices are all bankrupt. There is some talk of the English companies coming to the rescue. It may be mere talk; and if there be some grain of truth at the bottom of it, who can say when or how it may operate? Besides, at the best, apart from the dowry, Urlacher is a broken man. I did not bargain upon marrying an old man along with a young wife. Such a connection might be disagreeable and burdensome. The rich, respected merchant, Herr Moritz Urlacher, and his lovely daughter by adoption, is one thing; the same man, minus position, goods, and resources, although he may still have his lovely daughter—probably portionless—on his arm, is another. I would not do a dishonourable, or an ungracious thing for the wealth of the Indies;

but really, no reasonable man could expect me, in my position, to—to—”

He did not finish the sentence, even to himself. With a gentle sigh he murmured, “Poor Amalie!” and turned his thoughts to other matters.

## CHAPTER IX.

### FRIENDS FROM LEIPSIC.

“CHRISTIAN,” cried Jacob, as he burst into the room on the morning after the visit to the hospital. “Guess who has come to Hamburg?”

“Perhaps a troop of Austrian Uhlans,” answered Christian, “since they seem so fond of sending us soldiers. Or a Suabian fire-engine, now that the fire is out.”

“Neither,” said Jacob, who was in a state of feverish excitement; “nor any thing like them. Guess again.”

“Is it an English captain with a venture

of tailors' shears and razors ; and a hint that we may shave our heads for allowing our old city to be burnt, and must in consequence cut our coats according to our cloth ?”

“ No,” laughed Jacob. “ Though, for the matter of that, there are worse things in the world than shears and razors. No, they are visitors from Leipsic.”

“ Not Herr Rudiger ?”

“ No one less. I met him in the street while going the rounds with Herr Rostock, and almost ran into his arms with surprise and delight.”

“ Good old man ! How is he looking ?”

“ Bright and well as ever. It is quite a comfort to see his jolly face, But that's not all.”

“ What, in heaven's name, can have brought him to Hamburg at such a time !”

said Christian, pondering over the unexpected news.

“ Oh, for that,” answered Jacob, with all the gravity he could assume, “ he comes as a deputy from the burghers of Leipsic ; brings help to the poor people in money, and—what do you think—bread !”

“ God bless him for it !” exclaimed Christian. “ I might have expected that from him. At any rate,” he added, laughing, “ the good wives here will not be without a stale loaf in the larder.”

“ If he had only brought some goats’ cheese from the mountain people,” suggested Jacob.

“ Cheese ! We should have smelt him all the way from Berlin.”

“ But that’s not all. He has not come alone.”

“ Not alone ? Who accompanies him

then—not the Frau herself? The ‘Gnädige Frau von Rudiger, geboren Schnitzel?’ ”

“No, not the Frau, though I believe she has sent some good tokens of her existence. But look!” and he held up his little finger, on which was a small ring with a single turquoise.

“Not Winnie?”

“Yes, Winnie herself,” cried the overjoyed Jacob. “I do believe there was some magic in it, as they tell of the Genius of the Ring in the story books. For I was looking at my ring, and rubbing it, and lo! when I looked up, there they were!”

“A real incantation scene,” said Christian. “I hope it is not a delusion.”

“Oh no! real flesh and blood. And Winnie looked so handsome.”

“And coquettish as usual?”

“No,” answered Jacob, with glowing cheeks, and looking Christian full in the face. “I am sure she saw the ring, for she laughed and blushed a little; and she was not strange or coy, or wilful, but just as I always knew she was in heart.”

“Happy Jacob!” half sighed Christian. “I wonder how she ever persuaded the Herr to bring her to Hamburg.”

“It was partly her own wish, and partly the Frau’s, as the Herr told me. The Frau thought she herself could not be spared from home, and was quite sure the Herr would not be safe alone. Ha, ha! the fun of the thing! To think that Winnie should be placed as a sort of body-guard over the master—a little Jenny wren to protect the eagle! And he, like a good soul, enjoys the joke too, and calls her The She-lieutenant.”

“Where can I find him?” demanded

Christian. "I must pay him my respects at once."

"At Herr Rostock's at present—his is the universal reception-house. It is in the Deich Strasse, you know, and is one of the few which escaped the fire. I introduced the Herr to him at once. No sooner did he learn the errand upon which the master had come, than he threw his arms round his neck, and cried: 'Hail, brother!' with a kiss on each cheek. They are all there, save my little bird, who has flown back to the hôtel, the 'Great King of Prussia,' in Neuer Wall. I have come to fetch you."

The two friends were soon upon their way to the hospitable roof of Herr Rostock; and upon arriving there, Christian was welcomed with warmth, almost with tenderness, by his old master.

Glancing at the wounded arm which hung helpless in a sling,

“I see, Christian,” he said, “you are not without marks of the terrible conflict with an enemy too strong for us all. I have heard of your brave deeds.”

“Do not put him to the blush,” laughed Rostock; “he has a cheek as sensitive as a girl’s.”

“As for myself,” continued Rudiger, “it made my heart burn and my eyes weep to hear of Hamburg’s disaster. And so it was with us all. ‘Let every man help according to his means,’ was the universal cry in Leipsic. The same cry rings through all Germany; and I only feel proud that I am one in the vanguard of the army of helpers who, in person or by deputy, now hasten to Hamburg’s succour.”

“And a very sensible vanguard, too,” cried Rostock, “who comes with bread in one hand, and money in the other. But, oh,” he went on, thrusting his hands into his pockets, and striding up and down the room, “to think of the inequalities of fortune! Here am I, safe and sound; without so much as a hair singed; while many a better man lies low, with never a roof over his head, and his very flesh, metaphorically speaking—ay, and literally, too—burnt to the bone! Christian and I saw the first outbreak of the fire; were within a hundred yards of it; yet here we stand, under the same roof, with scarcely a timber scorched, while the flames have been running before us, over acres of ground, for almost a week. Donner and Doria! I would rather my little barrack had been blown to the stars, and the En-

chanted Island sunk to the bottom of the Deich, if only half the rest could have been saved thereby."

"Well, you did your best," modestly interposed Jacob, "to save the lives and property of others; and it was not quite without avail."

"We all did our best," Rostock pursued, a little petulantly, "and what did all our striving amount to? You should have stood with me, Herr Rudiger," turning to the worthy Saxon, "on the Lombard's bridge yonder, across the Alster, this morning. You should have been born and bred in the city, as I have been; you should have lived in it almost all your life, as I have done; and then, looking as I did across the water, you wouldn't have recognised your own birth-place, or your own home-city, any more than if you had been born

a Kalmuck or a Turk. The Alster, that used to be as bright as a mountain lake, the white swans curling their beautiful necks as they sailed proudly over its surface; the trim boats and gay craft darting and sweeping through its waves; was as thick and sluggish as the bottom of a sluice. Nothing floating on its muddy waters, but broken canoes; some keel uppermost, and even those that were righted, rolling about without oars or owners; charred timbers, and the indescribable bits and chips, flaps and tags of what had once been goodly furniture. As for the Jungfernsteig!—the houses were gone; the lime trees split and rent; hacked down to the roots, or burnt so that they stood like the charred ends of so many monster lucifer matches.

“Further away, it was even worse; and

you began to wonder whether the city had been rent to pieces by an earthquake, or been bombarded, sacked, and pillaged by a foreign enemy. For a good English mile there was scarcely a street to be traced, or a public building to be recognised. Here the ground lay as bare as your hand; there masses of brickwork, jagged timbers, and blocks of stone, were tossed in a hideous jumble. There tottered a wall with gaping window-holes, like the sightless eyes of a skull; here rose a calcined red and black ridge of stone, that might have been the fleshless skeleton of some dead monster, cast up and left on the beach by the tide. Everywhere it was a wreck, a waste, a field of desolation. As I looked at it, the tears rose in the sockets, and blotted it out from my eyes; but from my heart, never—never!”

“Ay, ay,” murmured Rudiger, moved by this expression of the anguish of the speaker, in whose eyes tears trembled as he spoke. “I can sympathise with you. I knew something of Hamburg, too, in my young days.”

“From the Holz Bridge,” continued Rostock, dashing the tears from his cheek with his hand, “it is as bad. I look about, and ask myself: Where is the Old Exchange; where is the Senate House, St. Peter’s Church, the Hof Markt? Every familiar nook and corner I have roamed and played in from a child is wiped away, as a man would wipe away a toy-village with his hand. Dust and ashes, dust and ashes! heaped up to one’s very throat!”

And it really did seem as though some of the dust had got into Rostock’s throat, and half choked him.

“Have you seen Herr Urlacher since the fire?” inquired Christian, partly as a means of distracting the thoughts of the afflicted Rostock, and partly for information. So far as the former purpose was concerned, it only raised a fresh subject of grief.

“There again! When we turn from the ruins of a city, it is only to meet the ruins of men. Proud, stubborn, irascible Urlacher; staunch and well-to-do but yesterday; and now—you might balance all he is worth upon the tip of your little finger. Ah, me! And there are hundreds more like him. I could pick you out in the course of half-an-hour a score or two of men scarcely worth a heller to-day, who were wealthy merchants not a week since. Why, Christian,” turning towards the young man, “I went over the ground

yesterday, where the casket was tossed out of Urlacher's hand. I thought, I hoped, that perhaps I might stumble over the lost treasure. Himmel ! I might as well have sought for a pebble cast into the sea at flood tide ; or the end of a fuse that had exploded a powder-magazine ! Why, man ! the very stones were calcined into powder, and if the casket had been of adamant, instead of poor ebony, it would have shared the same fate in that huge blast-furnace."

"I fear there is no hope of its recovery," said Christian. "The last link was lost when Botzen died."

"Ah, poor devil !" exclaimed Rostock. "I heard of his death from Jacob, here. But not even the ghost of Botzen could point out the lost fragments of that unlucky box. There now, again, the fire

was cruel and unjust. Botzen was a bad fellow, but he did not deserve to have his skin burnt off his back."

There was a sharp knocking at the door at this moment, which Jacob answered, and came back with a message whispered into Herr Rostock's ear.

"Talk of the devil," muttered Rostock, and with a short apology for his absence, quitted the room. Jacob too hovered a little while about the door, and then disappeared.

Left to themselves, Herr Rudiger, in his bluff, genial manner inquired of Christian the progress he had made in the enterprise which had brought him to Hamburg. Christian hung his head. The sense of failure and defeat was too fresh and strong to be overcome, and he could not bring himself to make that frank confession

which the person and the situation demanded. There flashed across his mind, too, his recent resolution to abandon his native country for England, in the hope of finding ease for his bitter disappointment among foreign scenes and people—a resolution made in utter forgetfulness of his promise to Herr Rudiger to return to Leipsic in the event of failure—and he stood confused and abashed.

“I cannot boast of my success,” he murmured, “but—”

“We have missed you, Christian,” said Franz Rudiger affectionately, marking his hesitation, and anxious to relieve it. “Both Barbara and I.”

“It is more than I deserve,” was Christian’s answer, as he met the frank gaze of the old man. “But not now—I cannot tell you now. I have much to say,

and know I shall find no more kindly listener than you. Will you have patience with me, father?"

"Yes, my son," replied Franz with an extended hand. "And remember, Christian, we have still a home in Leipsic."

Ere Christian could reply, save by a look eloquent of thanks, Rostock came bustling in, followed by Urlacher and Blitz.

"Let me make you honest people known to each other," cried Rostock. "Herr Moritz Urlacher, Herr Anacharsis Blitz, let me introduce you to Herr Franz Rudiger, burgher of Leipsic, at present in Hamburg on the honourable mission of rendering comfort and material aid to our suffering citizens; and, as occupying that position, the guest of our honourable Senate."

There was much formal bowing at this introduction, but that ceremony duly performed, a cordial unanimity seemed at once to pervade the company, to which Rostock's hearty manner greatly conduced. Even Herr Urlacher, evidently dispirited as he was, roused himself to assume the tone of the rest, and entered freely into conversation.

"I will tell you, gentlemen," said Rostock, "why I have brought you together. These are momentous times. Many of us in Hamburg stand in peril, no longer it is true of our lives, but of our means of existence. We who are here are burghers; we are men of business; we have grown old in the hurly-burly of life, and at such a time as this may, by interchange of counsels, reassure ourselves upon matters which concern us most nearly. If we can

do little as to the past, we may arrive at such conclusions for our guidance in the future, as may well make memorable such a meeting as this. Christian, my dear boy, we will not burden you with such matters, which belong to grey-beards, rather than to the smooth cheek of youth. Besides, you are among the wounded; and should not be troubled with too much subject for thought. Adieu, my friend, till to-morrow."

Christian acquiesced in this arrangement with the best possible grace, and left the grave citizens to their deliberations. As he passed towards the door, he whispered to Blitz :

"Where is Jacob? I have missed him."

"Gone to the hospital," answered Blitz.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE WIDOW FRÆBEL.

WHILE the four worthy citizens, seated in Herr Rostock's sanctum, were busied in earnest consultation upon the present state and prospects of Hamburg; while they reviewed the positive destruction and loss which had already fallen upon the city, reducing to penury a large portion of its inhabitants; whilst rumours of a general bankruptcy spread like a contagion its insidious virus through the minds of men, and threatened to produce the very ruin it foretold; a more peaceful

group sat in the cottage parlour at Wandsbeck.

It was an especial feature in the mental composition of the Widow Frœbel, that everything about her assumed a character of snugness and comfort. Not that she was especially neat, or prim, or orderly. Indeed, in some respects she was not orderly; that is, in the rigid, angular style, which in the opinion of some ladies constitutes the perfection of household arrangement. Clean she was to scrupulousness, but otherwise a comfortable irregularity marked her home economy. Widow Frœbel herself had an unconquerable conviction that she was the most orderly, regular, and methodical person within any reasonable distance of her own house. Her favourite maxim was not unknown to other matronly housewives, who, perhaps,

observed it a little more closely: "A place for everything, and everything in its place." And if everything was not in its place, why then it was "somewhere about the house;" which was quite near enough for the Widow Fröbel. Perhaps the secret of her success in the general result of making all about her thoroughly at home, lay in her activity; for though decidedly plump in person—an inevitable result of her equanimity of temper—she was always nimble and ready. She restored any missing article which might be out of its place to its proper position, with a willingness and a rapidity, which more than compensated for its temporary absence.

Moreover, she was affectionate and gentle, if neither erudite nor profound; and although perfectly ignorant of the

word comfortable, or any German equivalent thereof, had perfectly mastered the essentials of the fact, and was in all respects a most comfortable woman. Her tenderness of heart carried her to so great a length, that she invariably drowned the superabundant kittens of her cat, Hersel, in warm water, lest in that propitiatory sacrifice to the quiet of the house, they should "take a chill, poor things!"

The natural consequence of Amalie's stay at Wandsbeck under the good widow's roof—a consequence so natural that it might be called inevitable—was that Amalie found a sympathetic bosom in which to repose her confidence. The Widow Fröbel stood in the place of that mother whom she had never known. The fact of her betrothal to the prosperous goldsmith, Herr Ritzenheim, was, of course, a matter

of notoriety among her immediate friends, although no more imposing ceremony had taken place on the occasion than the interchange of rings in the presence of witnesses. Of this fact, the Widow Fröbel was perfectly cognisant, and if she had not been made acquainted with it through others, she must have found it out for herself from the tell-tale betrothal ring, which Amalie wore upon her finger.

So far, therefore, there was no secret to tell. But the return of Christian, and his assertion of claims which could scarcely be said to exist, or had never been formally recognised, were matters pressing upon Amalie's heart with a weight which could only be relieved by outward expression. Not that she told all her heart whispered to her; how could she

confide that to another which she dared not listen to herself? But it was an inexpressible relief to find a willing and sympathetic auditor to a narrative which had in it something of the charm of romance, and which she almost feared to confine to her own bosom.

Then, no more fitting confidant could be found in this matter than the Widow Fröbel, who knew Christian well, and who had some strong inklings of his boyish love for Amalie.

“Bless the boy!” exclaimed the Widow. “Don’t I remember him when he was no taller than that?” measuring with her hand about three feet from the ground. “A curly-pated fellow with such eyes! But we did not call him Christian then—he was the little ‘Grünwalder,’ for we had a Christian of our own.”

"Little Chriss Fröbel?" suggested Amalie, gently.

"Ah! dear me, yes!" sighed the widow. "What times they were! My dear Chriss and the little Grünwalder used to play together, and I never knew them to quarrel but once; that was when Chriss played the doctor, and would insist upon the little Grünwalder's swallowing pebble stones, instead of pills, from a spoon."

"Is that long ago?" quietly inquired Amalie, assuming an interest she scarcely felt.

"It is twenty years if it's a day. But you little puss," added the Widow, suddenly, "how old are you? You must know very well how long ago it is?"

"I am quite old enough," half laughed Amalie, "to remember little Chriss Fröbel,

and the Grünwalder also, for I played with them both."

"Ah, dear, dear, yes! But little Chriss has been dead sixteen years come June; and that's a month you have reason to remember."

"The month of June?" demanded Amalie. "Did *that* happen in June?"

"Yes, Amalie," replied the Widow. "Just ten days after my Chriss was buried; and *he* made the coffin."

"My father?"

"Even so; and then you and the little Grünwalder—"

"Call him Christian," pleaded Amalie; "I never knew him by any other name."

"Well, Christian, then. You and Christian came to be orphans together. Though the Grünwalder—Christian—was an orphan long before that. But how it came

about I never heard; indeed, I never rightly knew where the little Grünwalder came from."

Under all the circumstances, the Widow Fröbel thought it extremely natural and right that Christian should fall deeply in love with Amalie; that he should preserve his passion for her through years of absence; and that he should finally return and demand to be married immediately.

"And I have no doubt," concluded the good-natured woman, "that he is a very fine young man; for he had, I remember, very handsome hair and eyes when he was a boy, and a nose as straight as a dart. But it certainly is very awkward, my dear, that you should be engaged to somebody else; for you can't make them both comfortable, you know."

Perhaps this simple, unphilosophical

conclusion was as much to the purpose as any more profound judgment could have been. If it did not offer any practical way out of a difficulty, it placed the matter in its true light, and left Amalie with the consolations of sympathy, and an unburdened heart.

The evening was already darkening into night, and the Widow Frœbel, Amalie, and her maid Trinen sat at their never ending occupation of knitting; a trio as unlike the Fates, whatever similarity there might be in their employment, as any three mortals could well be. Trinen sat a little apart, having only recently joined them from the household duties she had undertaken in her temporary home. Herr Urlacher had not returned, although he had started for the town early in the day; and Amalie watched with increasing anxiety

every passing shadow, and listened eagerly to every distant foot-fall. Presently a rapid step, and a loud ring at the bell startled them all. Trinen, having answered the summons, came running back with letters in her hand.

“Two letters, Miss, for you,” she cried. “One of them is from master; I know his writing.”

Two letters! Amalie’s correspondence was not extensive, and the arrival of two letters at once was a phenomenon.

“That’s from my father!” exclaimed she joyfully, scanning the address by the fading light; “and this—” Her heart whispered the name, but her tongue was silent. It was from Herr Ritzenheim, she knew that, but could not bring the name to her lips. Under a strange impulse to postpone the knowledge of its contents

to the last moment, she laid it aside, and read the letter from Herr Urlacher. It was short, and merely, in a few affectionate words, explained that matters of importance might detain him in town; that, should he not return by a certain hour named, they might be sure he was staying with his friend, Herr Blitz in the Shaar Markt. This was simple news, and playfully kissing the superscription, Amalie at once communicated its purport to the Widow Frœbel. Slipping the other letter into her pocket, she tripped out of the room, and up stairs to her bed-chamber. There she sat down by the window with a look of half pleasure, half despair.

“He never wrote to me before,” murmured Amalie to herself, “but I know it is his.”

Still she hesitated to break the seal, holding the letter in her clenched hand, and pondering upon its probable contents.

“My father said nothing about his interview,” she soliloquized. “Perhaps he knows of this letter; it may have been written at his instigation. Or perhaps he has seen Ritzenheim—he must have seen him—and Ritzenheim has been moved by father’s cruel misfortunes; spontaneously, generously, has proposed some means of alleviating them. And this to me, out of delicacy to my father? Perhaps he wishes to hasten our marriage. Poor me! I must read it, but I am afraid.”

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE LETTER.

AMALIE tore open the letter with a hurried and trembling hand, and held it to the window that she might read it. But the night had stolen on in the meantime, and not a word was legible by the feeble daylight. She lighted a taper, and spread the letter out before her. It read thus :

“ Dear Fräulein Amalie,

“ I beg you will accept this letter in place of that visit I should be so happy to

pay you. I can so fully sympathise with the anxiety and the agitation which the events of the last week must have caused you, that I feel my presence in your retirement would be an intrusion ; the more so, that my own share in the losses and troubles of this unhappy time has so unnerved me, that I could not hope to bring with me either peace or consolation.

“The recollection of that fatal day which saw your father’s property reduced to ashes, and you yourself driven to seek an asylum under a strange roof, is ever with me. Our hurried parting before the church porch, when the humble place of refuge I offered you was refused—forgive me if I refer to it for a moment—has left a sad impression which seems to presage a division more lasting.

Not, let me hasten to add, from any diminution of the respect and regard which I should ever feel towards you, but from the pressure of uncontrollable causes which threaten to thrust themselves between us. Bitterly as I should regret such an event, I see too clearly that it already looms above us; and while it would ill become me to point out its character and aspect, you will excuse me, dear Fräulein Amalie, if I allude to a sad possibility, which, while it would set you free, would leave me desolate.

“Of the pitiable losses which your father has suffered, who can speak or think without deep sorrow? Yet he is but one among hundreds; and the ruin in which he is involved is shared by almost as many victims as there are mourners over his misfortunes.

“Believe me, nothing is so grievous to me as to be compelled to speak of these losses in a sordid spirit, or to make of a pecuniary mishap a ground for serious action. A generous enthusiasm should override such paltry considerations, in the conduct of life. But the simplest prudence must sometimes take the place of impulse; and alas! in our case, I fear that prudence is not merely commendable but necessary.

“In the anxious hope that these words may not give you the pain to read which they have cost me to write, I shall ever remain,

“Your sincere friend

“HUGO RITZENHEIM.

“P.S. Strange that on the day of the outbreak of the fire, I should break your betrothal ring! An evil omen!”

Amalie read and re-read this epistle till her eyes grew misty, and her head swam ; lost in utter incredulity of the evident meaning of the words before her. A look of irrepressible relief, coupled with the same look of despair, passed over her face.

“What can he mean?” she muttered to herself, again and again. “Not *that*, it is impossible !”

Then she threw the letter aside, and sat with her hands on her temples, trying to collect the impressions of what she had read into a single point, that she might understand their full signification. She could arrive at but one interpretation, and that one seemed so preposterous, that for a long time she refused to entertain it. When, at length, it so forced itself upon her mind that doubt became impossible,

her pride and anger so roused her, that she started to her feet, and grasping the letter would have torn it into fragments, but that the very intensity of her emotion restrained her. Crumpling the fairly written sheet in her hand, she paced the room from end to end, while the words "Heartless!" "Contemptible!" quivered on her lips. But not a tear, not a cry.

The voice of the Widow Frœbel recalled her to herself.

"My goodness!" cried the good dame. "What is my dear girl doing in the dark?" For the feeble taper had flickered out a few moments before she came into the room. Amalie made some incoherent excuse, and descended to the sitting-room, where supper had been spread during her absence. The Widow watched her out of the corners of her eyes, but

had the good sense and kindness to make no allusion to the letter, which she naturally surmised had detained her so long in her own room. Amalie rallied herself over the simple supper; forced herself to eat; and tried to be chatty and unconcerned. As there was now no probability of Herr Urlacher's return that night, the meal was brought to an early end; and quiet, if not sleep, soon reigned throughout the house.

For Amalie there was no sleep. It was long before she could even persuade herself to lie down; and then the long, thoughtful hours passed away in restless wakefulness. One strong resolution was dominant over all her other thoughts, and found utterance again and again in the words:

“ Never again will I seek his face ! never

again will I stand in his presence, if I die !”

She had fallen into an uneasy dose, which could not be called sleep, when she was fully awakened by several blows upon the window panes. It was broad daylight. Rising hastily, she drew the curtain a little on one side, and looked out into the garden. Her father was standing before the window, looking upwards ! Amalie gave a cry of surprise, then hurriedly attiring herself, ran down to the door and let him in. She fell upon his neck in the passage, like a weak child.

“What has been the matter, father ?” she demanded, suppressing her own emotion.

“Nothing,” answered Herr Urlacher, with a heavy, wearied air, while a faint, sickly smile played round his mouth. He

had a haggard, oppressed look, and sank into a chair, so soon as Amalie had led him into the room.

"I could not sleep," he said in explanation, in a slow, deliberate manner, very unlike him, "and came away unknown to them. As soon as the gates were opened I wandered here."

"Poor dear!" cried Amalie. "How tired you must be! Your bed is quite ready, waiting for you."

"Not yet," was the answer, mechanically given.

"Then you have no news for me, father?" said Amalie, with an effort at gaiety.

"No," he replied, in the same measured tone. "No news. Amalie, darling," he added suddenly, and with more energy, "can you bear a disappointment?"

"Anything!" cried Amalie, with her arms round his neck. "So that I share it with you."

"Then there is no news, but the old news," he continued; "and that may be all summed up in one word—ruin—beggary!"

Amalie wound her arms closer round his neck, and kissed his forehead.

"Even he, I fear," Urlacher went on, "has deserted us—deserted *you*, Amalie. Oh! that will be hard to bear! But it must be borne, and we two must fight through it together."

"We will, father, we will!"

"We will, Amalie!" Urlacher rejoined, in something of his old, energetic way. "But first, let us kneel down, and thank God together for a great victory. For oh, my dear girl! I have passed through a

terrible temptation, and with His help, have conquered."

He slipt from his chair on to the ground, and she sank on her knees beside him.

"How have you been tempted, father?" whispered Amalie, with both hands on his shoulder.

"By the gleaming of the wicked water, which mocked me with my own hideous shadow," answered Urlacher, with a calmness of manner in strange contrast with his words. "By the keen points of knives which thrust themselves into my hand; worst of all, by my own cruel fingers, which clung and played about my throat in eager grips to strangle me. The temptation was sore; but I have conquered, Amalie. Let us thank God!"

Presently they rose again, strengthened

and refreshed ; Amalie with grateful tears in her eyes.

“Now let me rest,” said Urlacher. “My soul is at ease, and I am weary.” He left her with a blessing, and crept quietly to his own room.

A new light beamed upon Amalie’s mind ; gentle, calm, holy. She returned to her bed-chamber with a firm step, and proceeded to dress herself with great care, in a costume simple in the extreme, but graceful in its simplicity.

“I will go to him,” she whispered to herself ; “for my father’s sake. I *will* stand in his presence ; I will seek his face once more, if I die !”

## CHAPTER XII.

### FALSE TO THE LAST.

HERB Hugo Ritzenheim was in his private room, in a state of mental and physical inquietude. Restless of body, and disturbed in mind, he could find no ease in any one posture or place for many moments together. If the thoughts which thus moved him had found expression in words, they would have taken some such shape as this :

“ Well ! it was a very right thing to do, and I did it in the most gentle and agreeable way possible. As it had to be done,

the sooner it was done the better, or else the motive of its doing would have lost its force through lapse of time ; and it might have given rise to other complications. Of course it was a disagreeable duty to perform ; but in the course of one's life-time, such unpleasantnesses have to be got through in the best way they can. It is all very well to talk about engagements, broken promises, and such sentimental balderdash. I suppose if a lady break her promise without much danger to her character, a gentleman may do the same without any great moral relapse. In fact, there is a great deal of nonsense in common circulation, upon the point of the relative obligations between the sexes in matters of the heart, as they are called. A lady may flirt, and involve herself in all sorts of love imbroglios, and if she jilt

some half dozen suitors, and marry a seventh in the end, she is only recognised as a girl of spirit. But let a gentleman fail to fulfil an engagement, made probably in a moment of mental confusion or absolute aberration—the result of an intrigue perhaps—and he is denounced as ‘heartless,’ and a breaker of vows. These conventional condemnations of supposititious lapses are terrible bugbears to weak constitutions, but a strong will can despise them.

“Let me take it now at its worst. A betrothal is, of course, something stronger than an ordinary promise, and brings with it a moral obligation, I confess. But then my betrothal with Amalie took place on the understanding, implied, if not spoken, that my bride that was to be was backed by a dowry. That is to say, that as

Amalie was the adopted daughter of a citizen reputed to be wealthy, it was naturally understood that she would be portioned in the ratio of her self-elected father's wealth. This, it must be allowed, was only a just conclusion to be drawn from the premises. How stands the case, however? Before the contract is fulfilled, one of the contracting parties is prostrated by a stroke of ill-fortune, and is rendered incapable of fulfilling his engagement. In plain words, Herr Urlacher is burnt out, and reduced from affluence to beggary; and the second contracting party is, of course, as being dependant on the first, in the same evil plight. Is, then, the third contracting party called upon to comply with the terms of an arrangement, the principal conditions of which cannot be carried out? The idea is absurd. I admit

that this is to regard the matter in the light of business, and not of sentiment; but if we allow mere sentiment, and exaggerated ideas of morality to guide us, what becomes of the hard realities of life?

“I know I shall be abused. Every man who goes straight onward in the road of life, leaning neither to the right nor to the left, and casting every obstacle before him out of his path, is sure to be abused; because, as a matter of necessity, he must tread upon, or kick somebody’s tender places. The rigid moralists who would rule other people’s actions by abstract principles, which somehow never apply to their own, will shake their wise heads, and cry ‘Shame!’ Others, not so outrageously good, will say it is ‘mean,’ and ‘shabby.’ But if I can satisfy my

own conscience—and that with me is, I know, a severe test—I shall feel utterly indifferent to the opinion of such censors ; because I shall know that all wise, practical men will be on my side.

“In point of fact, am I not myself the aggrieved party? Amalie is a beautiful girl—there can be no doubt of that—and according to all evidence and report, as prudent and virtuous as she is beautiful. I, who had rejoiced in the prospect of a happy union with beauty and goodness, find myself suddenly deprived of both. Of course, Amalie might have turned out extravagant, or not so good as she looks ; but that is only the common risk ; and at any rate I should have had my five thousand marks as a consolation. Taking all things together, I am the greater sufferer.

“As to the recovery of the insurances, and the payment at some future time of the vanished dowry, as Urlacher talks about, that is all moonshine; an *ignis fatuus* that only leads into the mire.”

While thus engaged in the not very arduous task of “satisfying his own conscience;” but which, nevertheless, was accompanied by very considerable mental and bodily contortion, Herr Hugo Ritzenheim was disturbed by a rap at his room door. This was followed by an announcement, that the Fräulein Amalie Lindenkrone was in the next room awaiting an interview.

If the floor had collapsed beneath him, Herr Ritzenheim could scarcely have been more surprised or dismayed by this intelligence. It cut short his arguments in the very middle, and left him face to face with

the real difficulty, still unconquered, over which he had in thought already gained the victory. His first idea was to frame some excuse, or seek some other means, to avoid the interview. But it was too late. His presence had been acknowledged. Coward as he was, he did not dare to fly before such a visitor; there remained nothing for it but to meet the fair intruder with the best grace he could assume.

With the courage of desperation he advanced into the room, rolling one hand over the other, as was his habit when embarrassed, and with a ghastly smile upon his face :

“My dear Fräulein Lindenkrone !” he exclaimed. “This is indeed a pleasant surprise ! Pray be seated. Let me hand you a chair. Alone too, if I am not misin-

formed." This would have been a sneer if he had dared; as it was it only took the shape of a bland expression of interest.

"Yes," replied Amalie, quietly, seating herself as she spoke, "I came alone, because I did not wish my father to be left by himself. He is not well."

"Poor, dear man!" murmured Ritzenheim, rolling one hand over the other. "This has been a terrible visitation for him."

"It has been a terrible visitation for us all," replied Amalie, emphatically. "For all of us, at least, who have hearts to feel, and hands to help."

Ritzenheim elevated his eyebrows, with an expression either of admiration, or of pity. It was necessary to do something in reply, for he did not trust himself in speech. There followed an awkward

silence, which Amalie was the first to break.

"I have come, Herr Ritzenheim—Hugo," she said, in the same quiet but impressive way in which she had first spoken, "because I scarcely understood, or rather, could not convince myself of the true meaning of the letter you wrote to me."

"Just so—just so," replied Ritzenheim, sliding into a chair. "I—that is—I—I found considerable difficulty in writing it at all—the situation is so very awkward—and it is very possible that I did not express myself as clearly as I ought to have done."

Here he paused, in the bewildered hope that Amalie would say something which might help him out of his confusion, or afford a loop-hole of escape. But Amalie sat mute; her large eyes were bent fully upon him; not angrily, not reproachfully

even, but in a steady, expectant calm. She was attired in the simplest fashion, in plain colours, and looked eminently beautiful in her sad serenity.

Ritzenheim fidgeted in his seat in a restless, unhappy way for awhile, and then broke loose incoherently: "The fact is, I—in this unfortunate crisis one is scarcely master of one's self—but, you see, my dear Fräulein Amalie, if you and I—that is, of course there is a sort of engagement between us; but the events of the last week have been so very terrible, that one is cast adrift, as it were, and lost in the confusion. Now, you see—suppose for an instant—that is, I mean, for instance, if our engagement were binding upon us under all circumstances—and I am sure you will do me the credit to believe of me that I would not do anything dis-

honourable for the world—but, the fact is —this is my idea of the matter—that it would be a cruel injustice to yourself to—to—”

Here he paused, raised his eyes from the ground, where they had hitherto been wandering, and glanced at Amalie, in the hope that she would speak; but she sat perfectly still and silent, her eyes bent upon his face in earnest attention.

“To be sure,” began Ritzenheim again, growing desperate, and bolder in his desperation, “if it were a question of your own certain happiness, I should not hesitate a moment. But, in point of fact, it is a matter involving indigence and discomfort. Not, of course, implying that your worthy father is to be classed with the common herd who have suffered in the terrible conflagration. But, speaking

personally, I, with the rest, have had my losses—that is, I may have, and probably shall have, among the many friends who are brought to the brink of ruin.”

Here he came to a stop again, and looked so imploringly at Amalie, that she broke silence.

“I do not follow you. This does not appear to bear upon my question.”

“My dear Fräulein Amalie,” exclaimed Ritzenheim, “I grant you that this is a matter in which I must of necessity appear to a disadvantage; because it is so easy to imagine an interested motive in affairs of this kind. But you can readily understand, that to introduce you to a position inferior to that in which you have hitherto stood; or to bring you into a course of life involving comparative privation, would be absolute misery to me, and a heartless

degradation to you. You, who have filled the place, not of daughter merely, in the household of Herr Urlacher, but of recognised mistress, could ill brook to humble yourself to menial duties, and become the drudge of a poor man's house. It is the mere thought, the suspicion, of such a result, which makes me recoil from being a party to the sacrifice; and impels me to place your release from such an eventuality in your own hands."

"But," said Amalie, "let me clearly understand you. I cannot, will not enter into these subtleties, the distinct meaning of which I have not been able to comprehend. The simple question is this: am I to accept your letter as a formal renunciation of our betrothal?"

A brighter colour flushed over her face, but she spoke without tremor or hesitation. Ritzenheim quailed before her.

“Renunciation, Fräulein Amalie,” pleaded he, “is a hard word.”

“I will not contend about a word,” said Amalie. “Choose one for yourself—rejection, denial, abandonment—if that be your meaning. Because,” she continued, after a pause, during which he made no sign, “the things of which you speak, so far as I understand you, would be personal to me; and until I refuse to fulfil the promise I have made, may be accepted—must be accepted—as part of the promise. But I do not refuse.”

“But,” said Ritzenheim, rising to his feet, and speaking with the hardihood of despair, “surely you can appreciate the loss, the desolation, which the fire has brought upon us?”

“Have you suffered any loss?” was her anxious question in reply to his own.

"Not individually—that is to say, I cannot tell as yet in what disaster I may not be involved with others."

"Am I then to understand, that upon this supposition, the promises interchanged between us are to be broken?"

"Not broken, Amalie," cried Ritzenheim; "do not say broken."

"I know no other word," she answered sadly.

"One may be released from an engagement by unforeseen and terrible circumstances."

"These circumstances do not release me, if our promises still bind you." She coloured more deeply now, and for an instant her eyes were cast upon the ground.

"But, my dear Fräulein Amalie," exclaimed Ritzenheim, with something like

real courage. "Would it be wise—would it be prudent, to hold ourselves to an agreement, the fulfilment of which we may both regret? Putting aside the losses in which I may be involved, look at the destruction which has fallen upon your father's property; the—"

"Is then our engagement simply a question of money?" interrupted Amalie, with a quick gesture of the hand, and a flash of the eye. This question must have stung Ritzenheim to the quick, for he answered it at once abruptly, almost savagely:

"So far as I am concerned, no! But this at least is certain—Herr Urlacher is burnt out of house and home, and your promised dowry is lost in the wreck."

"I know nothing of a dowry," answered Amalie proudly. "I was foolish enough

to think that I might be prized for myself alone. It was foolish, it was ignorant, it was selfish, no doubt."

"I do not say so," was his reply. "I simply say that that which some men might regard as indispensable is lost—irrecoverably lost."

"Poor father!" cried Amalie, with a plaintive moan. "He did not tell me this. This is a new sorrow." She buried her face in her hands, but it was not to weep. In another instant her head was raised, and she sat with the same calm, steadfast face and demeanour as before; with this difference, that if there had been a degree of haughtiness in her manner, it had now passed away, and its place was occupied by a deeper shade of melancholy. Her pride had succumbed to her pity for him, and she sat patient, almost subdued.

The silence was becoming oppressive, when Ritzenheim again forced himself to speak.

“Believe me,” he said, “this interview is most painful to me, and must be unspeakably distressing to you. I tried to avoid it by writing; and I can only regret that a meeting should have been considered necessary.”

“It was only necessary, Hugo,” replied Amalie, “because I could not bring myself to doubt your good faith—your honour. I must speak plainly, for this is too serious a question to be dealt with in any but plain words.”

This she said without any appearance of anger, but with a quietness and simplicity which gave it additional force.

“I had come to believe that my future happiness lay in your hands; and what

was more, that your happiness—it was a vain, foolish thought, no doubt—was bound up in mine. I had come to think this from my father's teaching, and your own professions. With such authorities, what else should I believe? It was not for me to doubt my father's words; far less for me to doubt your own. I might expect I should be my father's inheritrix—such thoughts caused me no concern—and in the little worldly knowledge I possessed, I might have known that such a position gave me a value no poor girl could possess. But my father told me nothing of this—certainly nothing of a definite sum to be paid upon my marriage as a dowry. My word to you—my faithful word, which I am prepared to keep,” her voice became tremulous for a moment, “was given in the simple faith, that I

pledged away myself—and nothing else. It might be worth little or nothing that I was prepared to give ; but you, whatever its value, accepted it as a prize, and both by word and token confirmed your acceptance. How, then, could I dream that the fulfilment of your promise hung upon an accident—upon fire or flood—instead of being dependent upon your own free-will ?

“ If my father has suffered loss, is it not misfortune enough that his worldly goods should have perished ? Must there be added to that great loss the disappointment of cherished hopes ? Because he has been stripped of much that he possessed, must he lose all besides ? But more than that—is gold better than honour ? Is purchased homage more valuable than affection ? Hugo ! let me speak

to you this once as I have never spoken to you before—may never speak to you again! Let me ask you if there was no stronger bond between us than could be reckoned in dollars and marks banco? Being the poorer by so much gold in your hand, am I worth nothing in your heart?"

Ritzenheim protested by a movement of his hand against this manner of dealing with the case; but his eyes were turned upon the ground, and he did not dare to raise them to her face.

"Really, Amalie," he muttered, "this is not the view to take of the subject. Can you think me so mercenary?"

"I only follow your leading, Hugo," she continued, sorrowfully. "If, when I was rich, as the adopted daughter of Herr Moritz Urlacher, you wooed me, and now

that I am poor, although the same Amalie, you turn from me, to what conclusion must I come? But say that I refuse to listen to such teaching? Say that I still cherish in my heart the image which I have been taught to respect—nay, to love? Say that I persist in my faith in him who plighted his word to me as a lover—as a betrothed husband? Must I live to learn that my trust has been misplaced? Or may I believe that all the terrible misgivings which have haunted me were only the phantoms of an overtasked mind, and that he to whom I had pledged myself was at once honourable, loyal, just?”

Her voice was clear and firm, but softened by a tone of tenderness; her eye beamed, her cheek flushed, and she bent slightly forward to give effect to her words. But these brought forth no res-

ponse. Ritzenheim bent before her—nay, grovelled in her sight, with downcast eyes, and arms drooping by his side. Something he muttered, half to himself, but all that could be distinguished were such words as :

“This is too distressing! I wish it could cease!”

Amalie rose to her feet. The colour faded from her cheek, and her eye flashed with a new fire. Erect, composed, and dignified, she stood before the man who cowered beneath her gaze. But she spoke not—her eyes spoke, indeed; and the mean, abject wretch before her assayed once to meet her glance, but its light was too keen and clear for his sight, and he drooped his lids again to the ground. Her whole expression, attitude, face, and form, told of but one feeling—unalloyed,

unutterable contempt. A moment more, and she turned to go.

“I have said enough—more than enough,” were her parting words. “I will return to my father.”

She laid her betrothal ring upon the table; and then, with a stately tread, passed out of the room.

Ritzenheim heaved a great sigh as she swept from his sight. He stood with downcast eyes, and a stooping form, making no other movement than to lock his fingers one in the other. Suddenly he ran to the door. “Amalie!” he cried, in a hoarse whisper. There was no reply. He dashed to the stair-head. “Amalie!” he half shrieked. Nothing but a dull echo smote his ear, and with a miserable moan, he crept back to his room.

## CHAPTER XIII.

AT THE "GREAT KING OF PRUSSIA."

THE hôtel Zum Grossen König von Preussen, Neuer Wall, Hamburg, was not in its exterior a remarkably attractive house of entertainment. Its *porte cochère* gaped grimly for customers ; its entrance hall, although spacious enough, had a stately gloom about it, which made the newly arrived guest hasten to pass its limits into the more cheerful regions beyond. There were little glass sentry boxes in odd corners and jutting points of it, where watchful domestics, spiderlike as to

their tendencies looked out for prey, and whence they made sudden pounces upon the unwary traveller and his luggage. There was a superabundance, too, of pedestals, with nothing on them; save here and there a ponderous lamp; as though their proper occupants had grown weary of making their *poses* in such a dull place, and to such an inappreciative class of spectators; and had wandered upstairs on to the first landing, perhaps, where there was quite a crowd of them. For the rest, the "Great King of Prussia" was much as other German hotels are. There were the same short-jacketed waiters with their strange jumble of French, in which all the *bs*, became *ps*, and the *ps*, *bs*; the same acrid odour pervading the house; the same pipes; and lastly, the same scarcity of water, and the same white pie-

dishes in which its residents were invited to wash themselves.

But let it be understood that the *Gas hof Zum Grossen König von Preussen* was a highly respectable hotel. A place where there was no stint of anything—water excepted, and that was no exception; where the fare was of the best, and the company of the choicest; and therefore it was evident that its very dulness had its attractions; that distinguishing feature being held perhaps by its inmates as associated with, or equivalent to, gentility.

Whatever its influence upon the general public might have been, it must have had especial attractions for Jacob Lindemann, once apprentice of Herr Baumeister Rudiger of Leipsic. Not a day passed without his being seen gliding up or down the well-polished stair-case, or lingering about

the dismal entrance-hall. Indeed, one would scarcely have been surprised if Jacob had taken upon himself to occupy one of the vacant pedestals in that sombre portal, judging from the absorbing interest he evidently took in the whole establishment.

Now, making all allowances for the fact that the Baumeister himself had made the "Great King of Prussia" his place of residence during his short stay in Hamburg; and that the worthy burgher merited all the kindly attentions his former apprentice could render him, it would scarcely account for the assiduity with which Jacob paid his court to the whole premises—so far at least as his privilege as a visitor gave him access to them. The master had been and was a good man; the apprentice a docile, affectionate youth;

and the kindly intimacy which continued between them was a pleasant thing to hear of; but it was not sufficient in itself to explain Jacob's unremitting attentions.

There must have been something else. Well, perhaps there was something else. It could scarcely have been the short jacketed waiters with damp napkins under their arms, or the pipes, or the white flat baking dishes which offered lavatory inaccommodation to the guests. It could be none of these. But it might have been a certain little, brisk maiden, named Fräulein Winnifred Seebach. A wilful young lady, who had persisted in coming all the way from Leipsic to Hamburg, -with the ostensible purpose of protecting, waiting on, and comforting the Baumeister Rudiger—all which purposes she carried out to perfection—but no doubt with the un-

acknowledged but fixed intention of having her own way. Somehow that way seemed to tend in the direction of Jacob Lindemann, and Jacob himself once set right, had no earthly objection to trace the same road. In short, Winnie had found out at last whither her heart tended, and as a unique act of obedience, gave it the lead.

So far as Jacob was concerned, it was evident that the path to be trodden lay between his own lodging, and the more pretentious quarters of the "Great King of Prussia;" perhaps a little further—but that metaphorically.

It happened that Jacob had been upon his usual morning visit; had waited upon the Herr, to ascertain whether he could be of any service to him that day; and having been thanked and dismissed with a

hearty word of acknowledgment, had made his adieus and retired. Of course it was only common politeness on the part of Winnie to show their visitor to the outer door. There happened to be a snug little lobby, which led from the small suite of apartments Herr Rudiger occupied to the grand staircase. This lobby was not very brilliantly lighted, it had a door at the stair end, and made a very convenient approach, as well as a place for the delivery of any little last-words and after-thoughts, which might soften the pains of parting.

On this occasion it would seem there were a great many last words to be said, and they took a long while in the saying; for Winnie did not return, nor did Jacob make his appearance on the stair in any reasonable time after leaving Herr

Rudiger. These are some of the last words.

"All the way to England," half cried Winnie; "across the sea?"

"Yes, dear Winnie," answered Jacob, "I might as well be across the sea, as anywhere else, if I cannot be with you. And then I shall have Christian for a companion."

"I don't see what I should do in that dull old Leipsic," exclaimed Winnie, a little spitefully. "We are to return there next week."

"I am afraid there is no help for it," sighed Jacob, sympathetically. "If I dared return to Leipsic before my time was up, it would not be long before I saw the Brühl again."

"But why not stay in Hamburg?"

"I shall earn more money in England.

I shall also be with Christian: a still greater inducement."

"And then you'll forget all about me."

"Not while I have your ring, Winnie. Look; I have bought another, as near like yours as possible."

"Dear me, what for?"

"For you. Let me see if it will fit you."

"Nonsense!"

"There! As if it had been made on purpose. Now we are betrothed, Winnie."

"Fiddlesticks!"

But somehow she broke into a happy little laugh, and held up her finger with the ring upon it—it was a simple band of gold with a single turquoise—towards the light; somehow, although they happened to be very close together before, by this

action of hers they came closer together still, and with a little dexterous twist, Jacob caught her in his arms, and imprinted a single kiss upon her lips, avert her head as she would—and she did not avert it very much. At the very instant, as she raised her hand to give the audacious fellow a good slap in the face, which he no doubt richly deserved, she caught sight of Christian, who had very innocently stepped into the lobby at this inopportune moment.

Christian, in all modesty, was backing on to the landing, when Jacob caught him by the hand, crying :

“Nothing could be better ! Be our witness, Christian ; Winnie and I are betrothed.”

“With all my heart,” answered Christian, stepping forward again to take his

part in the auspicious ceremony. But Winnie, with a little scream that had more of gaiety than chagrin in it, darted from between them and disappeared into the room. "All's well that ends well," laughed Christian. "I congratulate you, Jacob."

"Thank you. I think, Christian, I am in a position to be congratulated. Now I can go with you to England, or anywhere else, with a light heart."

Christian sighed as he answered, "It is upon that very matter, I have come to speak with the Herr. Is he within?"

Jacob having assured his friend upon this point, they parted; Jacob to hasten to his work, Christian to seek Herr Rudiger in his apartment.

He found his old master in dressing-gown and velvet skull cap, standing by the stove smoking his morning pipe.

Winnie was nowhere to be seen, having fled to her own chamber.

"I have come to tell you my story," said Christian, after a few words of cordial greeting.

"Then sit down, my son," replied Rudiger; "I hope it will be a pleasant one."

But the old burgermaster shook his head more than once, and snorted a grave dissent at many passages of the narrative. When it was concluded, he sat silent for a time, rolling huge volumes of smoke from between his lips.

"And a very melancholy story too," said he, at length; "it began badly, and has ended worse. I am sorry I cannot spare you much pity, Christian. If ever a man courted his own sorrow, you did. However, it is not to be mended now, and

it was as well, perhaps, to run it fairly out."

Christian sat silent; he had expected some comfort from the good man's sympathy.

"What, then, is to be done now?" inquired Rudiger, after a pause, during which the only sounds that broke the silence were the measured puffs from his pipe. "Whither now, since Hamburg has not proved to be the resting place you sought, and hoped it would be?"

"I am in your hands, Herr—" began Christian.

"Say, father," interposed Rudiger, between the puffs.

"I am in your hands, father," Christian went on, "as I pledged myself to be, should my enterprise fail of its reward. I will do your bidding."

“That is not enough, Christian,” answered Rudiger, “unless you do it gladly. You spoke of going to England?”

“Yes. I did so because I thought it would be new and strange. To confess the truth, father, I have lost peace and rest in this land, and care not whither I fly to find distraction for my thoughts.”

Another pause, during which Herr Rudiger puffed away vigorously. At length he spoke :

“You are mistaken, Christian ; you will find that your thoughts will fly quicker than you can. Distance is nothing in such a case ; time is everything. Nevertheless, if you think this voyage will comfort you, in mercy’s name, go ! I think the time will come when you will gladly return. My advice would have been :

Return to Leipsic with me. But I exact no such obedience from you, and do not blame you for your wandering desires. Yes, my son," extending his hand "you will go to England. When the time shall come that your heart shall yearn for the old country—and it will surely come—remember, if I am alive, I am still your father, in Leipsic."

"I feel it is an ungrateful choice," said Christian, grasping the proffered hand, "but my ill-fortune drives me before it. I will go to England."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### SACKCLOTH AND ASHES.

WHILE the fortunes of individuals were thus running their devious courses, the community at large of the half burnt city of Hamburg, was rousing itself from its prostration to a full sense of the losses it had sustained, and to active measures for their recovery. A burger-police was formed, to which clerks, artizans, and men of independent position flocked indiscriminately, and which soon made a formidable force. Nor was this force called into existence a moment too soon.

When the fire began to assume gigantic proportions, and the authorities became exhausted with the overwhelming duties which devolved upon them, the miscellaneous and half-foreign population of Hamburg began to give evidence that it contained elements of disorder, which if once let loose, would add a new and terrible calamity to that which already raged among them. Thefts and acts of violence were becoming rife. The fearful rumour which suddenly spread itself among the ruder sort of people, which arose, no doubt, from these very acts, that a band of incendiaries and robbers were spreading the fire through the city, in order to make it one vast scene of plunder and destruction, was in itself a powerful cause of disturbance. It led the excited people to take the law into their own hands, and

resulted in riotous outbreaks, and the infliction of serious injuries upon innocent people.

Happily, the spread of this spirit of disorder was checked at once by the new burger-police; who set about with energy to protect the property and lives of the distracted citizens, and to restore confidence among them. Next in urgency was the provision of shelter, clothing and food for the thousand of homeless and helpless people who were driven from their houses into the open places, in and about the city. It was roughly calculated that there were twenty thousand persons without a roof over their heads, many of whom were without beds, clothing, and even food. To remedy this frightful evil, all who had the means to help, rendered it without stint or after-thought; among them very

many who had themselves suffered heavy loss by the fire. A Committee of Assistance was formed to distribute the material help which in all shapes, money, food and clothing, was placed at their disposal.

Never was generosity more urgently needed; never was it more fully and spontaneously exerted. The full heart of Germany throbbed with sympathy for the suffering townsmen of their great maritime city, and solid proofs of their good will poured in from all sides. Nor was this active interest confined to the native states of Germany; foreign countries vied with them in the generous race, and contributions were sent from most European peoples, among whom the English were not the least prominent.

Wooden sheds, booths, and tents of canvas were set up in the environs with

the utmost rapidity, as soon as the great evil itself, the fire which had originated the mischief, was thoroughly suppressed. Visiting committees were appointed for the gratuitous distribution of food and clothing; offices opened where bread and other necessities could be had for the asking. Thus humanity strove in every way to alleviate the misery which was gathered around it; nor strove in vain. Where its efforts failed, it was the result of the social position of those whom it would fain have helped, but could not find available means to that end.

The mass of the middle class suffered most. The labourer, the workman, the artisan, in their different ways, found ready help; indeed, relief showered upon them in all shapes: employment, money, and food. But the burghers, who had

been responsible men but a few weeks before, and who were still regarded as provided with resources in some shape or other, were really more helpless than their own work-people; moreover, they were debarred, through social considerations, from seeking the help they so much needed. Added to this was the universal dread, amounting almost to conviction, that the provident institutions upon which the lately prosperous citizens relied in the event of such a calamity as had now befallen them, might crumble under the weight of their own obligation, and leave their clients utterly beggared.

There were scores, hundreds of men, therefore, in Hamburg, who were in the position of Herr Moritz Urlacher, though few, perhaps, who felt the reverse so severely. The very reserve and austerity

of the man; a reserve which separated him from the crowd, and made him bury in his own breast the thoughts and emotions which others gladly shared with their fellows, now brought a bitter punishment upon him. It came in the comparative isolation in which he found himself, and in the more sensitive pride which checked sympathy as if it were an offence.

Little comfort, indeed, had he found in the course of his researches among the merchants and responsible men of the city. Blank consternation was on every face; the reiterated confirmation of his worst fears upon every tongue. The desolation which loomed in his face almost overwhelmed him; and for a moment, he reeled and staggered before it. But the strong, proud will of the man prevailed, and he passed through the tempest,

humbled, indeed, but firm in his resignation.

The slumber into which he fell on the morning of his return to Wandsbeck, was long and deep. He awoke thoroughly refreshed. His first inquiry was for Amalie.

“Poor bird!” exclaimed the Widow Fröbel, in some little alarm. “I don’t know what has become of her.”

“Has she left the house?” demanded Urlacher.

“Oh, yes,” replied the Widow, making an effort to appear composed. “She ate her little breakfast, poor thing—it wasn’t more than a picking for a sparrow—and then she said she must go out. I was to be sure not to disturb you, but to be on the watch in case you might want anything.”

Here was a new anxiety, which threatened to be more terrible than any which had hitherto wracked his mind. He could not explain to himself the reason of her absence. He inquired eagerly the direction she had taken; and was angry with the Widow for letting her go at all.

“Goodness me!” exclaimed the Widow, in answer to his remonstrances, “she never asked my permission. I could as soon stay her from going whither she liked, as I could stop the wind. Amalie is a quiet, dear thing; but she has a will of her own. After all, Herr Urlacher, I don’t think you need be in any way alarmed; she is quite as wise as you or I, and knows how to take care of herself just as well.”

Whatever uneasiness had been aroused by Amalie’s absence, was soon allayed by the welcome intelligence that she was

approaching the house from the high road. It was brought in by Trinen; communicated in very few words, but by an abundance of jerks and waggings of her little round head. Presently Amalie entered the garden; walking at an unusually quick pace, with a feverish flush upon her cheek, and a flashing eye.

“Why, Amalie, my child!” cried Ur-lacher, in a tone of interrogation. “Where have you been so long?”

“I have been to town, dear father,” explained Amalie, advancing, and kissing his cheek.

“I hope you bring me better news than I was able to hear,” said he, with an assumption of gaiety.

“I will tell you all presently,” she answered, turning from him, and hastening to gain her own room.

The Widow Frœbel slowly, and with much meaning, shook her head, as she also left the parlour, and with a measured tread made her way upstairs. The good creature sat on a chair outside Amalie's door, and bided her time. When nearly half-an-hour had elapsed, and no sound came from within; no, not so much as the rustle of a dress; the Widow tapped gently at the door, and opening it just widely enough to let her voice be heard, said, in a soft whisper: "May I come in, Amalie?"

There was no reply. The Widow stole gently in. Amalie was kneeling by her bed side, her hands clasped before her face, her head resting on the coverlet. She evidently did not hear the entrance of the good woman, for she did not stir, or make any sign of acknowledgment of her presence. The Widow, with an intuitive perception

of what was best to be done, crept softly to her side, and kneeling also, drew her arm round the sorrowful girl's waist, and laid her cheek to hers. It was the motherly fondling of the true woman, and Amalie, waking up from her tearful trance, responded to the touch, and threw her arms round the Widow's neck.

"Has anything happened, Amalie?" asked the Widow, softly.

"Yes," murmured Amalie in a low, but clear voice, as she raised her head. "Something has happened. But it is not much. I see it clearer now. I cannot tell you yet—you must not ask me until I have spoken to my father."

She kissed the good Widow tenderly as she spoke, and rose to her feet.

"Tell him, I will be with him directly ; I have some news for him."

## CHAPTER XV.

### TRUE TO THE LAST.

IN a little while Amalie came tripping down stairs, her face pale but clear, and her eyes bright, holding a letter in her hand.

"See, father," she said, as she entered the room, "I received this letter—and I have seen him."

"Whom, Amalie?" asked Urlacher earnestly.

"The Herr Hugo Ritzenheim," answered Amalie firmly, and in a sententious manner.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Urlacher.  
"You surprise me, Amalie."

He sat down to read the letter, but it was some time before he seemed fully to grasp its contents. He re-read certain passages again and again. As the full conviction of its meaning, coupled with his recollection of the words which had passed between him and Ritzenheim at their last meeting, broke upon him, such expressions as "Contemptible!" "Paltry knave!" "Miserable wretch!" uttered with much bitterness, escaped his lips.

"And you have been to this man, Amalie?" demanded Urlacher, half in sorrow, half in reproach.

"Yes, father," answered Amalie, meeting his gaze frankly. "I did not wish to go at first, for I was angry at his letter. But when I came to think more seriously

of it, I thought it was my duty—my right to go.”

“He had forfeited his claim to such an honour,” cried Urlacher energetically. “*He* had abandoned both his duty and his right.”

“True,” replied Amalie, quietly. “But I thought I had duties to others to perform, as well as to him and to myself.”

Urlacher started, and fixed his eyes firmly on her face with an expression of wonder. Something smote his heart that he did not quite understand, and the feeling of reproach towards her died away within him.

“I did not realize what he had written; for I could not bring myself to conceive the full effect of his words,” continued Amalie, in the same calm tone, “I thought that if he could break his

pledge, I, at least, would not be wanting in mine."

"And how did he receive you?" inquired Urlacher, with the deepest tenderness and commiseration in his voice and manner. "Did he not cower before you?"

"His reception was such, that he left me free to despise and pity him. But I am glad I went, father. I have nothing to reproach myself with. Now that I owe no duty to another, I feel redoubled strength to strive against, and face the world with you."

Urlacher drew her to his heart, but sat silent for a time with a drooping head.

"I see it now," he said at length. "I can accept this from you, my child, if from no one else. Confess; you did it for my sake?"

Before she could reply, a figure passed

through the garden from the lower end—their faces were turned towards the window. Amalie with a faint cry, and pressing Urlacher's arm, exclaimed :

“Look, father ! Who was that ?”

“Christian, surely,” answered Urlacher.  
“Listen.”

There was the sound of the bell, and the tardy opening of the door ; then a voice was heard, the sound of which they both knew well. Amalie trembled in Urlacher's arm, as little Trinen, after a preliminary tap, curtsied into the room.

“If you please, sir, Herr Grünwald—Mr. Christian—has called, and wishes to speak to master.”

“Show him in, directly,” said Urlacher, advancing towards the door, and stretching out both hands to greet his visitor.

“Welcome, my friend, welcome !”

cried Urlacher with true cordiality. "This is a kind visit. It gives me joy to see you are so far recovered as to be able to venture forth."

Christian advanced into the room with a faint flush upon his otherwise pallid face, evidently gratified, from the smile upon his lip, by his reception. His left arm hung in a sling of narrow black ribbon, and he had that delicate tint of the skin, that air of lassitude, which betoken the confinement of the sick chamber. With something of hesitation, he proffered his hand to Amalie, who accepted it with a reserve and timidity scarcely natural to her.

"It was my duty, Christian," continued Urlacher, "to call upon you. But the troubles of the time have so harassed and occupied me, that I fear I have ne-

glected more than one duty ; certainly that among the rest. You will forgive me?"

Christian answered with a grasp of the hand, and his face lighted up with a brighter flush.

"Let me tell you why I have come," he said, seating himself in the chair placed for him, and turning with a restless glance from one to the other. "I am now, thank heaven, sufficiently well to make the journey I have projected. This sling is merely the doctor's badge ; I wear it out of compliment to him." He released his arm as he spoke, and smiled as he stretched out his hand. "By the time I have reached my journey's end, I shall have recovered all my strength."

"Then you really have resolved to leave Hamburg?" inquired Urlacher.

"Yes ; I had already come to that de-

termination before the fire broke out. But for that calamity, I should now be in England."

"In England!" ejaculated Amalie faintly, speaking for the first time since she had greeted him on his entrance.

Christian cast one troubled glance towards her. Then he turned his eyes upon the ground, and replied with an absent manner, and in a wavering voice :

"Yes; I have already wandered far enough in Germany. I want change of clime, scene, and people. I might never have seen you again, but for the fire. I owe it so much, at least, terrible as it has been. But after the events of that fatal time, I felt it would be a churlish thing to do to leave the land I may never see again, without bidding you good-bye."

“Never!” murmured Amalie, turning a sorrowful glance towards him. Christian caught the word, low-spoken as it was, and replied to it, by a quick, bright flash of his eyes; but he only met a face turned sadly towards the ground, and his own eyes drooped again, as he echoed the faint cry, “Never!”

There followed a chill, heavy silence. The heart of each was full; words quivered on their lips, which it would have been grateful to speak and rapturous to hear; but they were words which dared not be spoken.

“Come!” cried Urlacher suddenly, with a forced cheerfulness, “let us not sadden you with the gloom of our misfortunes. You have bright days before you, Christian; and you may rest assured that, whether in a distant land, or

again a resident among us, your welfare will remain our constant hope."

Christian rose to take his leave.

"Let me once more repeat," continued Urlacher, in a grave tone, "the obligations—"

"My dear master!—let me call you so still"—cried Christian, "do not speak of those things. I am more than rewarded already. The recollection of that one act, such as it was, has brought peace and confidence between us. Nothing in my whole life has been so great a joy to me. Adieu—adieu!"

They embraced, and Christian stretched out his hand to Amalie.

"Adieu, Amalie! my sister!"

"Adieu, Christian!" she replied with a strange fervour, taking his hand in both her own. "Adieu! Heaven be with you!"

He drew the hands to his lips, and kissed them passionately; then with a sudden impulse tore himself away. In another moment he was out of the house, waving his hand to them from the garden. Urlacher and Amalie lingered by the door as long as he remained in sight. Then they turned into the house, with a greater sorrow on their heart than any that had yet afflicted them.

Was there no friendly voice to whisper that one word which thirsted to be spoken! Malice, envy, spite, would have hissed a malevolent lie into the unwary ears of the happy, and made them wretched; but simple, modest conscientiousness dared not tell the truth, although the happiness of two honest, loving hearts hung upon the word!

With a drooping head, Urlacher seated

himself by the window. He scarcely dared to look at Amalie, who with a fixed gaze, and a blank, wan face, sat looking into the distance. A sense of blame, just, and therefore the more oppressive, fell upon him, and bitter regrets bubbled up to his lips; but they found no utterance on his tongue. He felt that mere words were vain; and for a time a strange, dull silence brooded over them. At length he took Amalie's hand, and pressing it tenderly between his own, looked into her pale, absorbed face. She came suddenly to herself with a start, a faint smile quivered round her lips, and she threw herself into his arms.

That night the name of Christian mingled with her prayers. She drew his withered cross of roses from its place of safety.

She prayed for strength: "For, oh!" she cried piteously, "this is hard to bear! Teach me that it is for my own and his good, that I may bear it patiently!"

## CHAPTER XVI.

### A TRAIL IN THE ASHES.

"WELL, Jacob—not Baby-Jacob now, but Man-Jacob"—said Herr Karl Rostock, playfully, "what is the news from the hospital?"

"I have not been to-day," answered Jacob; "Wilson was better on Monday."

The worthy pair were in the Enchanted Island, sitting under the banyan trees, smoking their evening pipes—if that could be called an evening pipe which Old Karl had scarcely relinquished all day—and

lubricating their throats with rum punch, a small tumbler of which stood before each on the rustic table. Herr Rostock had donned his velvet smoking cap with the gold tassel, and swathed himself in his dressing gown. This dressing gown had very much the appearance of a brown coloured counterpane, and he had tied himself with a cord round the middle, so that he was not unlike a gigantic roll of German tinder. Jacob was somewhat in deshabille, still attired in his working clothes, as though he had but just returned home; but his face shone from recent washing.

“Ah!” ejaculated Rostock. “Master Wilson ran a very close chance of following in the wake of his friend Watson, poor fellow! And we couldn’t afford to lose two of Blitz’s Englishmen.”

"Wilson's wounds do not heal very rapidly," remarked Jacob. "The doctor says it is bad blood."

"Of course. Too much beer, too much rum, too much brandy; too much of everything drinkable but water, and that our friend is not particularly fond of. The old story, in fact."

"But there is no danger now," continued Jacob. "He would leave the hospital to-morrow if they would let him. He has grown thoroughly sick of it—especially since Botzen died."

"Ah! I remember. Botzen was in the same ward, and the very sight of him was enough to make the boldest man quail and shudder. His death was terrible."

"He died raving mad—raving about some box he had lost. Do you know—" Jacob suddenly checked himself. "I have

often wondered why you were sent for, Herr Rostock, after his burial—will you tell me?”

“Why, you see, Jacob,” answered Rostock, settling himself more snugly in his seat, “the man was taken from my district to the hospital. I, as one of the Engine Masters, it was supposed, might know something of his friends in Hamburg, or of his relatives at home. As it happened, I knew nothing creditable of him; and that little I kept to myself.”

“Then was there anything to be sent to his family?” inquired Jacob, anxiously.

“Nothing; but the news of his death, and a bundle of half-burnt clothes.”

This closed the conversation for a time, and they both applied themselves more vigorously to their pipes, as a compensa-

tion for this brief abstinence of speech. Jacob was the first to break the silence.

"It was Herr Blitz who first took me to the Hospifal," said he, "to see Wilson. He, Jackson, and I, went together."

"A pretty trio," interposed Rostock.

"There, to my surprise, I heard of the sufferings and death of Botzen; from a man who lay in the next bed."

"What, Wilson?"

"No; Wilson was further off. This was a man named Lignitz, a Suabian."

"And did he die, too?"

"No; he was discharged 'sound' on Monday. Wilson and he were very good friends, and were chatty together; for Lignitz had been in England—he was a locksmith—at a place called Birmingham, I think. He spoke English a little."

"What was the matter with him?" in-

quired Rostock, in a stolid way, not taking a very deep interest in the narrative.

“He was also burnt, like Botzen, and bruised by a fall. They brought him in at the same time, and I think from the same place; indeed, I know they did.”

“Hah!” gruffly ejaculated Rostock, puffing away in a vigorous, but solemn manner.

“And the strange thing was,” continued Jacob, “that Lignitz was very much afraid of Botzen; wanted to be moved into another ward.”

“The deuce he did! What was that for?”

“Nobody could tell. The reason he himself gave was, that Botzen was so frightful to look upon that the very sight of him was enough to make a man ill.”

"Not so unreasonable either. And did Botzen rail at *him*?"

"Yes, he did; but then Botzen went on in his mad way against everybody. However, Lignitz was not allowed to change his bed, and Botzen soon afterwards died,"

"And Lignitz went away cured. And there's an end to the story, I suppose. Eh, Jacob?"

"I am not so sure of that. Wilson thinks not."

"What *does* Wilson think?" demanded Rostock.

"That is what I am almost afraid to tell you, Herr Rostock; lest it should turn out to be nothing."

"Something or nothing, let me know what it is," cried Rostock. "You are making me very uncomfortable with your hints and half stories."

“Wilson, thinks,” replied Jacob, in a slow, impressive manner, “that Lignitz knows something about the lost casket of Herr Urlacher.”

“You don’t say so !” shouted Rostock, springing to his feet. “That would be news indeed !”

“Yes !” responded Jacob, flushing quite red with the idea. “I have been afraid to tell you this before, because it might turn out to be nothing ; and you would laugh at me.”

“Should I ! I am sorry you should think me such a mad cap. I hope we shall laugh together over it, yet. Come now, tell me all you know, Jacob, and I promise you I’ll be as serious as a judge.”

“Well, I will take the risk now, for the affair is becoming critical. It was all very well so long as Lignitz was in hospital ;

for then, as Wilson said, 'the best thing we can do is to lie quiet, and let him talk as he likes.' But now that he is at large, it is a different thing."

"Donner!" cried Rostock, who had laid down his pipe, and was shifting uneasily about the island. "We'll take a corporal's guard and arrest him at once!"

"No, no!" exclaimed Jacob eagerly. "Let me tell you what Wilson says. Wilson says, Lignitz is a very sly, cunning fellow; and it has only been through letting him go on as he liked, and appearing to take no notice of him, that what we know has been found out. 'We know something,' said Wilson, 'but not enough; Lignitz must be watched.'"

"A-ha! just so; well?"

"When Lignitz first came into the hospital, he did not seem to know Botzen.

He took no notice of him; but was very anxious about a bundle which had been brought in as his own, and given to the governor at the gate."

"What sort of a bundle?"

"It was an old great coat rolled up as a sort of wrapper round something else, and tied with a handkerchief."

"Has the governor got it still?"

"No: for when Botzen began to rave about the casket, and accuse every one in the ward in turn of having stolen it, Lignitz, as I told you, tried to get moved into another ward. Besides that, he managed to scrawl—his arm was very badly burnt—a letter to his landlady, as we suppose; for the same day an old woman came, and with this letter as an authority took away the bundle."

"Worse and worse!" cried Rostock, in

an outburst of vexation. "Why wasn't it stopped?"

"Ah, but, Herr Rostock, you must understand that all this was only found out subsequently. Wilson had only been a day in hospital, and knew nothing of Herr Urlacher's loss. Indeed, it was only when Herr Blitz and I went to visit him, that these things came out. Besides which, I went many times alone and told him stories about the fire to amuse him. You remember that Wilson helped us to remove Herr Urlacher's goods?"

"To be sure; Watson, Wilson, and Jackson."

"Yes; and Wilson recollected the ebony casket very well, for it stood on the table with the wine glasses."

"And he recollected the wine too, I'll warrant."

“Very likely. Wilson did once ask Lignitz if his bundle was all safe, and if there wasn’t something very valuable in it. Lignitz answered that it was nothing of much consequence; only some things he had saved from his lodgings when he was burnt out. But we learned afterwards that he was not burnt out at all, for he lived away by the Old Steinweg. When Wilson heard this, and put all these things together, ‘I’d bet a hundred pounds,’ said he—‘if I had them—that chap’s got the old man’s black box.’”

“But in what way will all this help us, Jacob?” demanded Rostock.  
“The man is gone, and the black box too?”

“Wilson says he knows where Lignitz lives; and that some one should be set to watch him. If there is anything in the casket that can readily be turned into

money he will try to sell it, or pawn it."

"I'll set the police on his track in less than an hour," exclaimed Rostock, making towards the door. "Perhaps he may change his lodgings."

"Wilson doesn't fear that. Lignitz is going to England again, and wants his help."

"The rascal! Yes! to get rid of the spoil."

"May be; but, at any rate, he is certain to visit Wilson in the hospital again for addresses, and a letter of recommendation."

"There's not a moment to be lost," exclaimed Rostock, energetically. "This is my plan: first, set a man to watch this Lignitz; you, in the meantime, shall gain all the fresh information you can of his movements, from Wilson; I myself will

see Urlacher, and learn from him such particulars of the contents of his casket as may serve to identify them. What think you, Jacob? Will that do?"

"I knew you would give me the best advice," answered Jacob, cheerfully. "But, so far as I am concerned, you know I am pledged to accompany Christian to London."

"When?"

"To-morrow is our last day in Hamburg."

"In that case we must fall back upon Blitz, who will take your place. Come with me; I am in a perfect fever to do something."

They had scarcely emerged from the "Enchanted Island" into the corridor, ere they espied Herr Anacharsis Blitz toiling and panting up the staircase.

"Holloa, my cherubum!" shouted Rostock. "Upon my life I should have rather expected you from above than from below."

"I wish you didn't live so high up," gasped Blitz.

"My dear infant!" was Rostock's reply, "we'll have a lift for you, if you will persist in coming upwards instead of downwards. You will only have to step into a closet, shut the door, cry 'Presto,' and you will find yourself at the top story before you can draw breath."

Blitz smiled spasmodically between his short gasps, and turned to Jacob.

"There has been a messenger from the hospital," he said, earnestly, laying his hand upon the young man's arm. "A messenger from Wilson. He must see you directly."

"This is no time for visiting ; the gates are closed for the night," answered Jacob.

"You must beg the governor for permission to pass—so says the messenger. It is urgent ; next to life and death."

"If I fail, it will not be my fault," cried Jacob, seizing his hat, which hung close at hand. "Await my return, Herr Rostock, I entreat you ; it may be of the utmost consequence." The next moment his rapid footsteps were heard descending the stairs.

Anacharsis Blitz turned a rueful countenance upon Rostock.

"More ill news !" he cried.

"Whose cat has kittened now ?" demanded Rostock, in a tone of irritation.

"Don't be so ridiculous. Listen." And he drew him aside into the little room which opened on to the corridor.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### STEP BY STEP.

BLITZ and Rostock were soon deep in serious discourse, and Jacob was hastening at his utmost speed to the "Algemeine Krankenhaus" in the Spitaler Strasse. This "Universal" Hospital, as it was magniloquently called, was by no means a cheerful building, inside or out. It might as well have been a prison, as a house for the healing of the sick, to judge from the blank, sombre look of its outer walls, or the long gloomy, white-washed passages, and small sick-wards of the interior. At most times sufficiently full, and that with

no select class of patients, as being the common hospital of the town, it was now crowded to excess by the number of the burnt, and otherwise injured persons, gathered there in the course of the great conflagration.

The evening was already far advanced, when Jacob presented himself at the outer gate for admission. To his first application he received a curt refusal; it was only after long beseeching, and special consultations between the chief officers, that his request for an interview, if it were only for a few minutes, with one of the English patients—he himself having sought it for the most pressing reasons—was granted. The permission once accorded, very few moments elapsed before Jacob was seated by the bed side of the wounded English engineer.

"So, they've let you in, Mister Jacob," said Wilson, smiling grimly at his visitor as he held out his hand. "I didn't expect you."

Wilson was up, but partly undressed; was sitting on the bed itself, and seemed to have been about to betake himself to it.

"I had great difficulty in obtaining admission," answered Jacob, kindly pressing the extended hand. "As it is I have only a few minutes to stay. How are you to-night?"

"Why, I hardly know," answered Wilson, stretching his arms out, as if to be assured that he was quite whole. "I expect they'll turn me out next week. But, oh, Jacob, I should so like a drink of good beer!"

Jacob expressed his sympathy with this

longing; and looked the anxiety he felt to learn the cause of his being summoned at so unusual an hour.

"Look you here, Mister Jacob," said Wilson, at once comprehending the inquiring glance. "I shouldn't have sent for you, only it was so very particular. I thought I shouldn't have another chance. That fellow Lignitz has been here, and see what he's brought."

He drew from his breast a folded piece of paper, which, upon being opened, exhibited both printed and written words, the meaning of which Jacob could not understand.

"Oh, it's English," said Wilson, by way of explanation. "That's why he brought it. It's not worth a screw for that matter, for it's only a bill and receipt for some goods; a mahogany dressing case, an-

some other things. I can read well enough to make that out. They've been bought in London, and paid for."

"What do you infer from that?" was Jacob's bewildered inquiry.

"Ah!" answered Wilson, with a self-satisfied chuckle, "you don't see it, but I do; at least I think I do. Just listen a moment: Lignitz brings this bill to me. He can't read it, and don't know what it means; but he thinks it's a foreign bank note, perhaps for a thousand pounds or so. Well, he wanted to know all at once what it was worth; but a thought strikes me like a flash of lightning. Thinks I, perhaps this is a bill out of that old gentleman's black box that was lost in the fire. He dealt in furniture you say?"

"Yes; can it be possible?"

"Well, I was not going to let this out

of my hand so quickly as all that. I made out it was a difficult hand to read—it's as clear as print—and I said : ' Come you to-morrow, Mister Lignitz, and I'll tell you all about it ! ' Luckily, as it happened, the bell rang just at the time for visitors to go, for he came very late. I got rid of him, and here's the paper. Now—"

"But," interrupted Jacob, "the bill should contain the name of the purchaser, and—"

"Ah ! but that's just what it doesn't," Wilson broke in, "If the old gentleman's name was on it, that would settle the matter at once. But, bless you, that don't matter. Perhaps the man who sold the things didn't know the customer's name, and didn't care to ask, so that he got the tin. Perhaps they were bought over the counter at some old broker's. Who knows ?

But what I say is this: You take this paper with you, Mister Jacob, and show it to that old gentleman. I wouldn't mind betting my old shoes against a pair of new boots that that old gentleman 'll say: 'That bill was in the black box, that I lost.' There now! If Lignitz isn't a rogue, I'm a fool; that's all."

"I must see Herr Urlacher to-night," exclaimed Jacob in great agitation.

"That's it," approved Wilson. "And bring it back in the morning; the first thing too, for Lignitz will be waiting for the opening of the hospital door, I know."

"But suppose it should be Herr Urlacher's?" said Jacob, hastening to depart.

"Why then, I expect you'll have to bring a policeman along with you, that's all. Good night, Mister Jacob."

“Good night!” exclaimed Jacob, giving the honest engineer a hearty grasp of the hand. “Look out for me in the morning.” And soon he was speeding like the wind, in the direction of Rostock’s house.

Upon reaching the well known habitation in the Deich Strasse, Jacob found, to his surprise and disappointment, that Herr Rostock was absent; having left the house, in company with Herr Blitz, a little time after his own departure for the hospital. Herr Rostock had, however, left a message that Jacob should stay and await his return. Every moment that was passed in inactivity seemed to Jacob, in his state of mental excitement, a precious opportunity lost for ever. He awaited with the utmost impatience the arrival of his friend, but time sped on in fruitless expectation, till

an hour or more having elapsed, he resolved to return home, in the hope that he might find Herr Rostock at his own lodgings, or learn from Herr Blitz, his present landlord, some news of him. Moreover, he would there find Christian to advise and assist him. Last of all, the night had already so far advanced that there was some doubt, if he delayed longer, as to his being admitted into the house.

Jacob was not long in gaining the house in the Shaar Markt. He succeeded in obtaining admission, but not without a snappish reception from old Hirscl, who, having been disturbed in her nap, was not inclined to receive him graciously, or even to help him with a light to find his own room.

In reply to his questions, she mumbled, garrulously that :

“For her part, she didn’t see what young people had to do out at that time of night; she was quite sure it could be for no good. Was her master in bed? Of course, he was; and a very proper place, too, at such unlawful hours. She wondered what next people would want—they would want her to stand at the door all night with a candle in her hand. But they were very much mistaken if they expected any such such things from her. Was Herr Christian in bed? What business was that of hers? She supposed he was; and if he wasn’t, he ought to be. She couldn’t be kept there all night talking. Of course, Herr Rostock had been there—two hours before, at least; but Herr Christian wasn’t at home then, and he mightn’t be at home now for anything she knew. Indeed, she didn’t believe he

was at home. He was gone after his ship, or something. He didn't tell her anything about it; but somebody said he was gone to Cuxhaven; and he might be gone there, or anywhere else, for anything she knew or cared. No; Herr Rostock didn't stop five minutes. He wanted Herr Christian, and said he should go and find him. Now she thought of it, she knew Herr Christian wasn't at home, for he had never come for his candle. She wasn't going to be kept there all night in the cold, deprived of her lawful rest. If he wanted to know anything more, he must ask her in the morning."

Jacob listened with the utmost patience to the querulous answers of the old woman, and having satisfied himself of all he could hope to learn, he bade Hirscl good-night, and mounted to his own room.

Christian was not there, and Jacob was thrown completely on his own resources. What then was to be done? To seek Herr Rostock or Christian further would be a hopeless undertaking. To start for Wandsbeck at that hour of the night, now that the patrols were about, and the town gates were closed, would only be anticipating discomfiture; to find, probably, at the journey's end, that Herr Urlacher and his household were dead asleep. It was evident there was nothing to be done but to wait till the morning. Then, by taking time by the forelock, it was still possible to do all that was required to be done by the hour that the hospital was open to visitors. With this little comfort, Jacob, with an inward groan, tumbled into bed, and soon fell asleep.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THREE WORDS.

IN the meanwhile, Herr Rostock, after an interesting quarter of an hour's conversation with Blitz, which, to judge from the expletives which escaped his lips and his violent gesticulations, must have been on an exciting topic, hurriedly left the house in company with his friend in search of Christian, leaving the message that Jacob should await his return.

Christian was not at home, and the little information which could be obtained concerning him was most unsatisfactory.

“Gone to Cuxhaven!” reasoned Rostock, aloud. “What the deuce should he go to Cuxhaven for, when he can find the ‘John Bull’ at the New Quay? There’s no ice in the river, and they can cross the bar with the first tide. I don’t believe it. The ‘John Bull’ doesn’t wait for passengers at Cuxhaven at this time of the year. I shall go to the New Quay.”

Herr Rostock was right in his conclusions. He found Christian on the New Quay, leaning against a capstan, looking in a pensive reverie upon the tranquil stream, and the ships lying at anchor.

“Stand!” cried Rostock, in a mock heroic tone, as he placed his hand upon his shoulder. “Herr Christian Grünwald, I arrest you!”

Christian started in alarm; but upon meeting the frank countenance and merry

eyes of Old Karl, he smiled, and stretched out his hand, saying :

“ I yield myself prisoner, Herr Karl Rostock—till to-morrow at high water.”

“ That’s as much as to say that it’s low water with you now ?”

“ In more than one sense—yes.”

“ And yet,” said Rostock, taking him by the arm, and leading him slowly a few steps along the Quay, “ and yet, Christian, if any man’s fortunes were ever at flood, your’s are.”

“ It’s very deep water with you, Herr Rostock,” laughed Christian, quietly ; “ I can’t fathom you.”

“ Donner-wetter !” exclaimed Rostock. “ I must out with it. I can’t keep the secret. I’ve such news for you, Christian !”

“ Good news, or bad news ?”

“Good news is not the word. Glorious news! What do you think? Ritzenheim has turned out a sneak, and Amalie—your own Amalie—is once more free!”

“What do you mean? I do not follow you.”

“No wonder, my dear boy, no wonder. It is incredible. Yet it is true. Herr Hugo Ritzenheim, the goldsmith, to whom Amalie—Fräulein Amalie Lindenkrone, if you will—was betrothed, has sneaked out of his promise, now that her father is burnt out, and begs to be excused from marrying her.”

Christian looked in his friend's face with a bewildered stare, silent and incredulous.

“You won't believe it? Oh, but it's true, Christian; I feel it's true. He's a false hound, and it's just what I should have expected of him.”

"When did you hear this?" demanded Christian, abruptly.

"Oh, it's a fact. It's buzzing about the town already. I tell you; Blitz told me; old Hirscl told Blitz; Gretel, the parlour-maid, told Hirscl; and Ritzenheim's own man told Gretel. So there you have the whole pedigree; and better pedigree for a truth or a lie was never yet traced."

"Can it be—*can* it be?" murmured Christian, while a delirious joy seemed to break out of his eyes, and something like a tear trembled on his cheek. "Poor Amalie!"

"I should say: 'Poor Ritzenheim,'" cried Rostock. "What will you do?"

Christian pondered a moment.

"What is the time?" he suddenly asked.

"Some half hour after seven."

"How long will it take to walk to Wandsbeck?"

"A good hour from here, to brisk legs."

"Will you come with me?"

"Would you go to-night?"

"Now!"

"Bless you for a gallant fellow! But, no, Christian; you are better alone on this expedition. Besides, I am no Cupid. There are no wings springing out of my shoulders."

"I could not wait till to-morrow if it would save my life!"

"Heaven forbid you should! Go, my friend, and Love—or what is better, for Love has gone before—Success, go with you. Apart from the fact that I am not a fit page for an amorous knight, I am in for patrol duty at eight o'clock. Good-bye!"

“Good-bye!” echoed cheerfully in reply from Christian’s lips, as he turned towards his destination. Many and many a time had he trodden the road he now followed, but never under such such an impulse, or with such speed. Sometimes he ran, impelled by the overwhelming rapidity of his thoughts, and only halted when his strength failed to carry him further at the same pace. Familiar things swept by him in dizzy confusion; he only saw before him the one object he sought, and, that rapid as was his progress, seemed to retire and fade as he advanced.

It was dark, as at length he approached the house, and checked himself, panting and weary, at the garden gate. There were lights above and below; a faint glimmer in the chamber which he knew to be Amalie’s, and a brighter glow beneath.

Now that he stood at the very portal, his heart sank within him, and he hesitated. But it was only for an instant; he rang loudly at the bell. He met the wondering face of Herr Urlacher, who opened the door, with outstretched hand, and a voice of passionate pleading, as he exclaimed :

“ Amalie ! Let me see Amalie ! My dear Urlacher—oh, let me speak to her for a moment ! ”

Urlacher fell back before him, as he almost forced his way into the house, in silent astonishment.

“ Amalie ! ” cried Christian from the foot of the stairs.

Amalie heard his voice. But a little while before, and she had prayed :

“ Oh ! this is hard to bear ; teach me that it is for my own and his good, that I may bear it patiently ! ”

And now he stood at the stair-foot, and called her by her name !

“I am here,” she answered, and swept down the stairs ; her hair falling loosely down her shoulders, and a simple robe of white floating round her. Christian seized her hand as she reached the last step, and eagerly demanded :

“Oh, Amalie ! Is it true ?”

Strange that these few words were the key to the secret thoughts of each, and set their souls at liberty ! Strange that there was needed no explanation, no dwelling upon details, no repetition even of the simple facts—known full well to one, and scarcely believed, but passionately hoped for, by the other ! Strange that the simple words, “Is it true ?” told a long story by their single utterance ; like a talisman opened the hearts of each to each, and

left not the shadow of an obstacle between them !

Amalie's eyes flashed with the full comprehension of the meaning of the words, and her whole countenance beamed with unspeakable joy. The shadow of her trials had fallen away from her, and the assertion of that which at its advent appeared an overwhelming sorrow, sounded like a burst of triumph.

"Yes, Christian," she said simply but firmly. "It is true !"

"Thank God !" was his fervent exclamation, as he folded her, unresisting, in his arms.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE END OF THE TRAIL.

JACOB rose betimes, but not so early that Herr Rostock had not played a lively tattoo upon his chamber door, before the young carpenter had time to admit his visitor.

“Good-morning, Jacob,” cried Rostock. “A word to begin with,” raising his finger to his nose. “Are you going to fall foul of me for not keeping my appointment last night? Because if you are, I shall begin first.”

Jacob assured him he had no such inten-

tion, and pointed with his finger to Christian, who lay fast asleep. "I don't know when he came home," he half whispered. "Shall I awaken him?"

"Hush, no!" answered Rostock, in the same tone. "Let him sleep; and all good angels float round his head! And now to business."

Jacob gave him a detailed account of all that had passed since their parting the previous night, and Rostock listened with the deepest attention; sometimes breaking out with the exclamation "Good, good!" at others giving vent to a loud chuckle.

"Come!" he said when the recital was ended, "I rather like this. This document, although I don't understand it, speaking honestly, does appear to me a promising clue to a discovery. It is English; that is certain. Now, I know, that

Herr Urlacher had occasional dealings with Englishmen, directly or indirectly. This bill, receipt, or whatever else it may be, as our honest friend Wilson says, relates to household furniture. That's a strong point."

"Had we not better consult with Herr Urlacher at once?" suggested Jacob.

"No," answered Rostock, decidedly. "In the first place, I should like to surprise him with the good news of the recovery of his treasure; in the next, I think we can gain the information we seek much nearer hand. It lies at our fingers' ends, so to say. Come with me down stairs."

They descended to the ground floor together, and by the aid of a vigorous pull at the bell, brought Herr Anacharsis Blitz to the door, with a vivacity in his manner quite astounding at that early hour.

But very little explanation was needed to put the worthy man in possession of the facts of the case. Rostock concluded the short narrative by thrusting into the eager listener's hand the paper brought from the hospital.

"You have had the management of many of Herr Urlacher's affairs," said he; "can you make anything of this?"

Blitz was dubious at first, turning the document over and over, and upside down, shaking his head in perplexity. But suddenly a light seemed to break in upon him, and illumined his face like a beacon.

"Ransom, Ransom?" he exclaimed. "That's the name! Yes, Ransom! That was the young fellow who came over from Hull, and got into a scrape at Peter Ahren's. I got him out of it. His father was a cabinet maker, and had some splendid

veneers to sell. Yes, Ransom was the name," with quite a boyish glee. "I remember he came to me one morning—"

Rostock ruthlessly cut short his gossip. "Then you recognise this paper?" he demanded in a judicial tone.

"I believe I know whence it came."

"And you will swear that it was once in the possession of Herr Urlacher?"

"I have not the least doubt about it; but—"

"Then put on your hat, my good soul, and come with us. We have not a moment to spare. If that fellow, Lignitz, should get before us, it would spoil the whole game."

Rostock's energetic method of procedure soon put matters in such train, that the three friends reached the hospital gate in time to make their entrance with the first

posse of visitors. They found Wilson awaiting them in evident anxiety.

"You see, gentlemen," he said, when he had greeted them all round, "there's something in this business I don't exactly like. It's a sort of a—not a fair and above board sort of thing. It looks, in fact, something like an informer—and damme! I hate an informer."

Assured from all sides that he was labouring under a misconception, Wilson still thought it necessary to explain:

"I know it's quite a right sort of thing to do—I'm quite aware of that, you see—but, upon my soul, I wish anybody else had done it but me. 'Let every honest man turn out a rogue;' that's my sentiment; but for all that I'd rather be a looker on, don't you see, while somebody else played the game."

Warned by Rostock that time was precious ; that any moment might bring Lignitz upon them ; the three visitors, as had been previously arranged, withdrew to a distance, and awaited with all the patience they could summon the arrival of the suspected man. The time lagged heavily enough, and yet it was not long before, to their surprise, they saw a thin, dark man standing by the bed-side of the engineer in eager conversation with him. So swift and so noiseless had been his entrance, that no one had seen him until now. They unconsciously drew nearer to the two men, watching their every gesture, and listening for every murmured sound of their voices. Presently they saw Wilson raise his hand to his head—the preconcerted signal—and advance by a single step towards them. At the same

time he raised his voice from its former low tone: "You see, Lignitz, I'm not much of a dapster at that sort of thing myself, so I thought I'd ask a friend what he thought of it; and—"

Before he could finish the sentence Rostock was by his side. The eyes of the dark, thin man flashed with a sudden fire, and then sank, and flickered, as he peered from the face of one to the other in the uncertainty of surprise.

"And here he is," cried Wilson, in a hearty way. "Mr. Herr Rostock—this is Mister Lignitz that I told you of."

Lignitz made a formal bow, to which Rostock scarcely replied. Then there was an awkward silence which no one seemed willing to break. At length Lignitz, in a sharp, dry voice, as if it were forced out of him, demanded:

“And what may your friend think of it?”

Wilson turned to Rostock, who had drawn the paper from his pocket, and now held it distinctly visible in his hand. “I shall be able to tell you better,” answered Rostock, sternly, “when I have seen the others.”

The same flash of the eye lighted up the face of Lignitz for an instant, and then sank again beneath the contracted eyelids. He peered round him from one to the other, as if, growing conscious of being gradually enclosed in a net, he was seeking a gap in the mesh by which to escape. By this time Blitz and Jacob had drawn round the other side of the bed.

“Good!” he said, in the same sharp, dry voice, as he drew himself up, and buttoned his coat across his breast. “I will go and fetch them,”

He made a step towards the door, but found himself enclosed.

“So, then he has others?” said Rostock, with a grave smile, and speaking to Lignitz in the third person singular; a most offensive form of address in Germany, and only adopted to a criminal, or obviously inferior class of persons. “He must stay. We have a word to say to him.”

“Why should I be detained?” murmured Lignitz, in a snappish, but still subdued tone, “I have done no harm.”

“That remains to be shown,” answered Rostock. “He does well to speak low, for there are quick ears about us. Let him listen. Thus stands the case: That he, Heinrich Lignitz, locksmith of Podsau, Wurtemberg, now residing in the Old Steinweg, Hamburg, did, on the morning of the sixth day of this present month of

May, being the second day of the great fire, possess himself wilfully and knowingly of a certain casket or box; the same being of ebony inlaid with ivory, belonging to and owned by Herr Moritz Urlacher, merchant, worthy citizen and burgher, resident up to the time named in the Deich Strasse.

“That the said casket was thrown down in the confusion of the fire, and was so found by him, Heinrich Lignitz; who, having possessed himself of its valuable contents, is now fraudulently and thievishly endeavouring to make away the same for his own profit. Is it not so? What says he, Lignitz?”

Lignitz drooped his head and answered not a word.

“Here are ‘honourable men gathered round him,” continued Rostock, in the

same measured, low, and magisterial tone, "who are ready and prepared to take any means the law has placed in their hands to remedy this wrong. To bring down its terrible punishment upon the head of him, Lignitz, if contumacious; but who, as charitable citizens, are not unwilling to regard his crime as an error committed under sore trial and temptation, if he, Lignitz, should manifest such sincere contrition and repentance, as at once to make restitution of that of which he is unlawfully possessed. What says he, Lignitz?"

Lignitz neither raised his head nor uttered a syllable.

"Herr Lindemann," said Rostock, sternly, turning to Jacob, "you know what to do. You will find the watch in the courtyard."

Jacob obeyed on the instant, and had

almost reached the door of the ward, when the low, but sharp voice of Lignitz called upon him to return.

“No, no!” cried the dejected man. “I will give it up. But I did not steal it—I only found it.”

“And he kept it to himself?” interposed Rostock.

“It would have been taken by some one else. It was already lost; a little while longer, and it would have been burnt.”

“All this shall be taken into consideration,” replied Rostock; “although it comes rather late. Can he write?”

“Yes.”

“Let him sit down. Here is a pen, ink and paper,” producing these materials. “Let him write, that he found this casket, giving day and hour; and that he is prepared to render it to its lawful owner.”

"Don't be too hard on him," whispered Wilson, as Lignitz, with a trembling hand, proceeded to obey this order. "It was only a sort of find after all."

Rostock made no reply, but watched with the eye of a lynx, the slow movement of the hand of the writer.

"It cannot be too short," he remarked, by way of encouragement, as Lignitz paused in his work, and sighed heavily.

"I would rather fetch you the casket at once," he said, grievously, looking up into the face of his task-master.

"We will see about that presently," answered the inexorable Rostock. "He does not compromise himself; he does not say he stole it."

Lignitz bent again to his unwelcome task, and this time finished it; then he handed it up for inspection.

“Let him add: ‘with its full contents, and uninjured; to be given up within this hour.’” It was done. “Let him sign it.” It was signed. “Now we will go,” said Rostock, folding the declaration neatly together, and placing it in his pocket. “You all are witnesses, gentlemen?”

Bidding adieu to Wilson, who repeated the whispered solicitation, not to be “too hard upon him,” they made their way into the street in a kind of irregular procession; Jacob and Blitz leading the van, while Rostock followed as a sort of rear-guard. Nor did they break this order, until they reached the house where Lignitz lodged in the Old Steinweg. Rostock then bade his two friends wait at the door while he ascended the stairs with Lignitz. “If you hear me call,” he said, aloud, as he left them, “come; that is all.”

Herr Blitz and Jacob, however, received no such summons. In a very short time, Rostock reappeared, bearing triumphantly the long sought-for casket in his hand, while Lignitz followed humbly behind him.

“You will remember, gentlemen,” he said, with some lingering spasm working about his mouth, “that I gave the box up willingly.”

Rostock, who had lost all his gravity of voice and deportment, and seemed as full of rollicking fun as a stripling, burst into a laugh at this reminder.

“Seest thou, Lignitz,” addressing him this time in a more cordial form of speech, and with a broad grin upon his face, “it is astonishing what a man will yield when he is fairly put to it. According as you put a question, so you get your answer ;

and for my part, I think thy answer quite as good as my question. Do not be downhearted at parting with that which never belonged to thee. Take thou this card; thou wilt find us at home at most times in the twenty-four hours. It may still happen, that in consideration of thy excessive readiness to make restitution of another man's property, thou may'st not go quite unrewarded. At the worst, thou must remember that the man who, at the nick of time, draws his neck out of a halter, may congratulate himself upon his dexterity—in that he escaped hanging."

Lignitz turned with a discomfited look into the house, and the three friends went rejoicing homewards.

"This last hour," exclaimed Rostock, in the exuberance of his delight, "is worth half a life-time. I felt so overcome when

I once got the casket in sight, that I could have fallen upon the neck of that fellow Lignitz, and kissed him, for being such an ass. I'll plead to Herr Urlacher yet to grant him some reward; for what a race he could have run us! After all, my friends, Blitz and Jacob, one can only regard this matter in two ways: either as treasure-trove, or as soldiers' plunder. Heavens! why Hamburg was no better than a sacked city, when this man broke his shin over a sharp, angular, black box, and picked it up with an oath! Of course, one may sermonise about morality—but then, men are men, not angels."

## CHAPTER XX.

### LAST SPARKS.

ONE watches the last sparks of a dying fire, no longer with the interest of hope, but with the determination to see the end of it; and so the reader—and the writer—may linger over the concluding scraps and ends of a story already told.

There are many events one hears of in life, which it is better to have presented in the crude outline than in the finished shape; the imagination will fill in the picture much better than the tongue or the pen. Indeed, sometimes both tongue

and pen make a sad confusion of details ; therefore these last words will give only outlines of events, to which the reader will supply the finishing touches.

As may naturally be inferred, Christian's journey to England was postponed—indeinitely ; indeed, there seemed to be no reason why he should make it at all. The postponement of his journey as naturally led to the abandonment of that of Jacob, for the one was dependent upon the other. Jacob would have gone to the end of the world with Christian, but was not likely to wander out of his native country alone. The day of the finding of the casket was an eventful one in more than one sense ; it set free some who were bound ; and it bound, or at least strengthened the bonds, of some who were free.

To Herr Urlacher it was an unconditional release; and he rose from the burden of his calamities like a giant refreshed. To Christian it was additional freedom; for now that his marriage with Amalie had become as much a matter of course, as if it had been pre-arranged from the first, neither the deep love of Amalie for her father, nor the honour of Christian, would have permitted them to abandon Herr Urlacher in his extremity. They would have stood by him, have battled for and soothed him, with all the ardour and strength of their young hearts. Now, however, they felt he could stand alone; and the fetters fell from their feet, and left them free to wander whithersoever they listed.

For Herr Rudiger the event brought new ties of which he had not dreamed, and

strengthened those which had become so loose as to have almost ceased to exert any control over the feelings or movements of their wearers. To Jacob, it came like a new coil of the silken rope which already bound him to Winnie.

The first act of Rostock upon the recovery of the casket, was to start post haste for Wandsbeck, calling, however, upon Christian by the way. He found the young man in the sweet delirium of his great joy; so great that he knew not how to define it in his own heart, or explain it to others. Even the good news of which Rostock was the bearer, gratifying and unexpected as it was, seemed only the complement, the natural sequence, of the delight which had gone before. His first impulse was to accompany Rostock to Wandsbeck, to take part in bearing the

good tidings to his old master ; but at the same instant a new thought flashed across his mind, which suggested another course no less important.

This thought turned upon the departure of Herr Franz Rudiger for Leipsic, which Christian knew must be imminent. Indeed, he had already taken his farewell of both the good Franz and Winnie, preparatory to starting for England ; and was not at all sure that he might not be already too late to see them again. He abandoned therefore, but with sore reluctance, the idea of accompanying Rostock to Herr Urlacher. With many words of remembrance to both, he set out at once for the lugubrious regions of the " Great King of Prussia." Jacob, for some reason best known to himself, joined him ere he had gained the street, and the two young

men soon reached their destination.

Herr Franz Rudiger was upon the point of quitting the hotel, as Christian and Jacob gained the entrance hall; but the good man turned back at once to learn the reason of their sudden appearance. Christian, drawing the old man aside, requested to speak with him alone; and somehow Jacob succeeded in the same object with Winnie. Christian, with a frank and earnest brevity, told the strange story of his now successful love, and the unexpected recovery of Urlacher's lost treasure. Explained that he had now no motive for travel in foreign lands; and placed himself, modestly—as in his conscience he felt himself bound to do—in the hands of the worthy Saxon.

A bright light flashed across the countenance of Rudiger, as he grasped

the hands of Christian, and exclaimed :

“Heavens ! this is indeed a rare chance !  
Come with me, my son, and let Leipsic  
be your future home.”

“And the good Frau Rudiger?” suggested Christian, doubtfully.

Rudiger looked grave for an instant ;  
then burst into a laugh, as he answered :

“Well ; Barbara will welcome from my  
hands, both a son and a daughter.”

Seeing that Christian still hesitated, he  
continued :

“I will strike a bargain with you,  
Christian. You shall introduce me to  
Amalie, and if I like her, the affair is  
settled ; we start together for Leipsic.”

Christian smilingly agreed, and suggested that they should proceed at once to Herr Urlacher—who was already known to Rudiger through the introduction of

Rostock, by the conveyance which was to have taken the intended travellers to the posting house. The proposal was so heartily received, and so well carried out, that in a little time the whole party of four were clattering over the road, and reached Wandsbeck close upon the heels of Herr Rostock himself.

Radiant under the influence of the happy discovery just communicated to him, Ur-lacher received them with open arms; while Amalie, beautiful in her tears of joy, gracefully seconded the welcome. There was a little bridling, and distant curtseying at first, on the part of Winnie, under the perception, which seemed to come to her instinctively, that the tall, graceful girl before her, was the bride elect of Christian; but even this disappeared before the gentle, winning manners of Amalie, and

her own good-nature. Something in Herr Urlacher's manner seemed to have a strange attraction for Winnie, which brought out her best qualities, and made her doubly amiable.

"I have made up my mind, Christian," whispered Rudiger in the young man's ear. "We start for Leipsic."

"With the lady's permission," replied Christian, in the same tone, a gay sparkle in his eye.

The arrangements to be carried out involved some little delay and careful management, but the good will of all parties interested soon enabled them to arrive at a happy conclusion. This was not done at once. Franz Rudiger's departure was delayed nearly a week thereby; but finally all was arranged. It was a hard trial for Urlacher to part with Amalie, but when

the bright little Winnie crept to his side, and whispered :

“ Will you take me instead ? ” he bent to the necessity with a good will, and accepted the exchange. This little piece of intrigue on the part of Winnie was entirely unexpected, and was received by Jacob with as much surprise as delight, and by Franz Rudiger with complacency.

“ Give and take,” said he laughing, as he grasped Urlacher’s hand at parting. “ It is a fair exchange at any rate ; and I don’t know who will have the greatest cause to rejoice over the bargain.”

During all these pleasant complications, Herr Rostock had the tact and good-nature to keep in the background. He felt himself out of place, he said, in such company, for he was not of a marrying age. But he rallied Jacob till his cheeks were

of a deep crimson, and said he would pray for him that his three years of probation might pass quickly. Herr Urlacher was profuse in his expressions of gratitude to "old Karl," as Rostock still delighted to be called; for he had come to learn that it was to him, in a great measure, he owed the recovery of the casket, with its really valuable contents in deeds, bonds and even jewels. But Rostock refused to be thanked; and hinted that after all, Lignitz was not such a bad fellow; and that a little present to him might not be so ill bestowed. Urlacher adopted the suggestion, and sent the grateful locksmith one hundred marks banco.

The soft-hearted Anacharsis Blitz laughed and cried by turns, as these events worked themselves round to a conclusion. He invariably concluded any remark he

might venture to make, by a touching allusion to the amiable qualities of his deceased wife, as being a matter quite appropriate to the question. Even when Wilson came out of the hospital—which he did, hale, sound, and thirsty—Blitz's best advice to the Englishman, in order to avoid future peril of whatever kind, was to take a wife ; adding with a sigh :

“ You remember my dear Lousie, Wilson ?”

Wilson had some recollection of that lady, and winked mentally at the unconscious Blitz, as he recalled to his mind her shrill voice, and angular peculiarities. But he did not follow the advice.

Herr Hugo Ritzenheim required no incentive to wedlock ; he was only greedy as to the conditions. When at length he did take the irrevocable step—and he was

a long while in making up his mind—it was in the hopeful assurance that he had obtained all he coveted. He had done even more: wealth, and a fair share of youth and beauty were his; and it must afford extreme pleasure to every well balanced mind to know, that he got a bitter shrew into the bargain.

It was, perhaps, only natural that the doubt which had found expression on the tongue of Christian, as to the reception the Frau Rudiger might give to these new arrangements, was equally felt by Franz Rudiger. There was an uncertainty about the “fits” of that otherwise amiable lady, which made calculation as to results very hazardous, almost impossible. The threatened danger was met by the tact of Christian, and the beauty and gentleness of Amalie. This was their little intrigue.

They threw themselves at the feet of Frau Barbara, and like dutiful children, asked her advice and protection. So, as the Frau had it all her own way: managed the wedding, and had undisputed possession of her house and household as before—Christian prudently electing to live apart—the Frau Rudiger was at least as well pleased as any one else.

Sitting in the snug little parlour of the cottage at Wandsbeck, her face smiling in dimples, and her hands locked together and spread upon her bosom, the Widow Frœbel unconsciously epitomised the situation in the words:

“What a blessing it is that we are all comfortable at last!”

\* \* \* \*

Taking a peep into the more distant future, we find the city of Hamburg rising

out of her ashes—it would be a poor compliment to say more beautiful than ever, for she was undeniably ugly to begin with—but beautiful in noble, public buildings, broad streets, and handsome houses. Like true men, the Hamburger citizens set about converting a heavy calamity into a great public benefit. Their sufferings were terrible for awhile; but they came stronger out of the contest with disaster; and erected on the wide, fire-charred ruins, as on a foundation, a nobler structure. The commercial prosperity of the old Free Town was not checked for an instant. Her commerce never slackened even while the flames were burning her very heart out; her public credit, stunned for a moment, quickly recovered from the shock; and with timely help from foreign—must we say, English?—sources, was in

the end equal to the pressure of all her obligations.

The dismal perspective and selfish calculations of Hugo Ritzenheim were all at fault; Moritz Urlacher came to his own, and in a few years grew more prosperous than before the fire. Long, however, ere this consummation, he had sent to Christian Grünwald, in Leipsic, the amount of the dowry he had promised to Amalie, and which he still held to be her due. Meanwhile Winnie kept house for him; a smart, busy housewife, restraining at arms' length her sweetheart Jacob, until such time as by sanction of law and authority, he could lead her to the altar. Even this event came to pass in due course, and was all the more happy for the delay. Jacob had profited greatly in the interval; had grown dexterous of hand, strengthened in

judgment, and consequently high in the confidence of Herr Urlacher, whose right hand man he was. When Jacob Lindemann and Winnifred Seebach were married, there was but one home, of which Moritz Urlacher stood at the head, father and patriarch.

“Here’s more news!” cried Karl Rostock, bursting one morning into the room where the family were at breakfast. “Christian writes to me to announce the arrival of a second little Grünwalder, whom he has had the impudence to christen Karl. The first was Christian; the second must be Karl—after me, forsooth! I’ll tell you what it is; I’m going to pay a visit to my nephew Gustav, in garrison at Berlin, and I’ll just run on to Leipsic, if it’s only to tell Christian a bit of my mind.

“Do you know the day of the month?” he rattled on. “The fifth of May, by Jupiter! Three years ago this day what consternation we were in! Fire over our heads, fire under our feet, fire everywhere! And not much cold water anywhere but what lay on the top of our hearts. But it did us good. It burnt up a lot of rubbish; and while it showed us that we were not fire-proof, a good many of us were PROVED IN THE FIRE.”

THE END.

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